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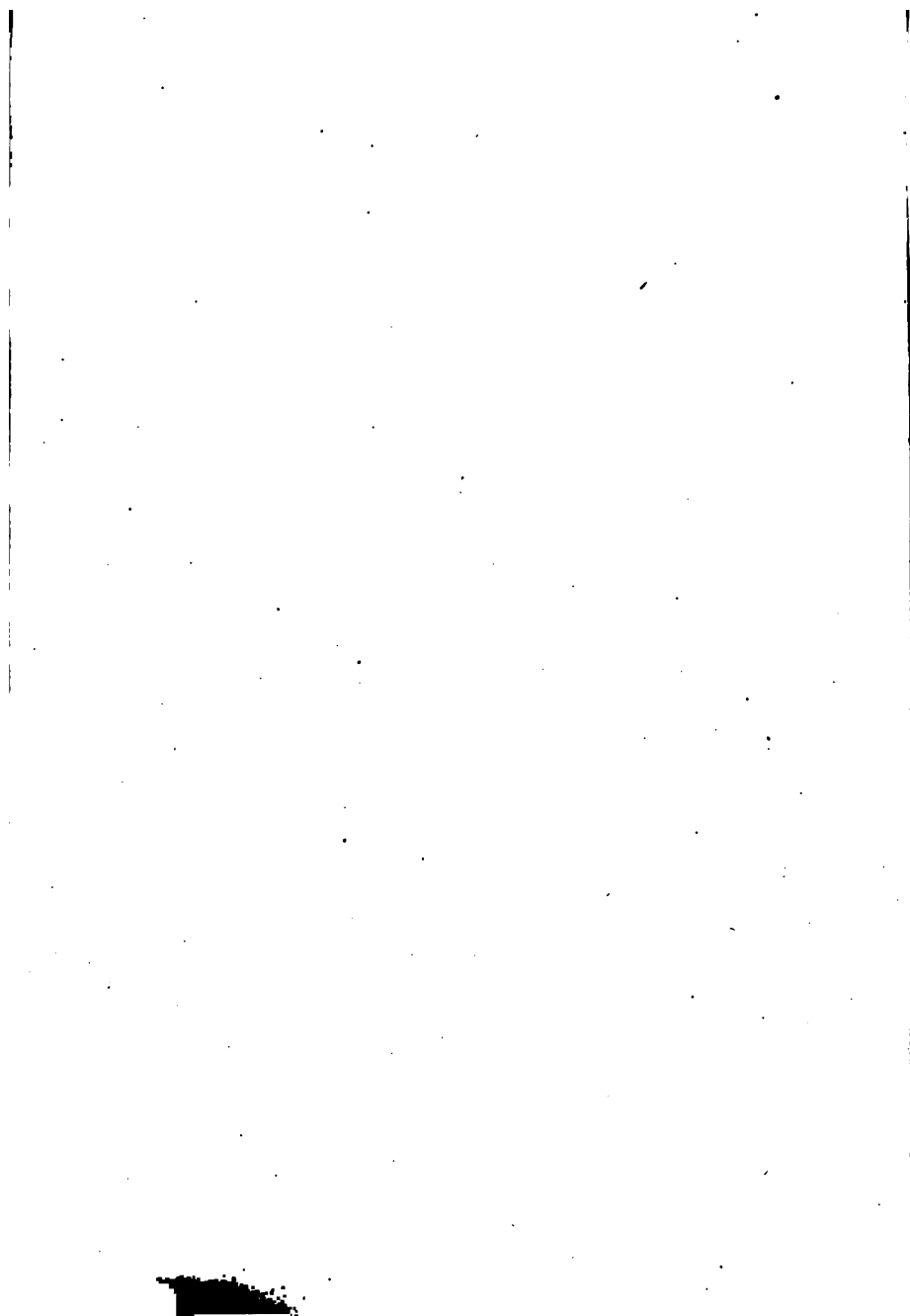




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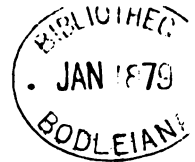
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THE
LORD HERMITAGE

A Nobel

BY
JAMES GRANT

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES—VOL. III.

London
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THE LORD HERMITAGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE ZOUAVE.

THOUGH he little knew the trouble such a trifle had cost as the flask of wine, most grateful and profuse in his thanks was the poor wounded Zouave, who lay stretched on a bed of straw in a corner of Julián's miserable hut, which was lighted by the dim radiance emitted by a piece of candle stuck in the socket of a Russian bayonet, planted in the sod which formed the floor.

Achille Richebourg looked ghastly and pale from the loss of blood; but the pain of his wound had abated, and already he had become impatient to be up and doing, and again with his regiment, though he was still weak as a child; but the incessant noises incident to the siege, by day and night, fevered his ardent

spirit, for the booming cannon and the crash of the exploding shell became so incessant that, as a general rule, they ceased to excite either interest or attention ; yet it is affirmed by some that the higher our civilisation rises the more finely our nerves become strung, and that man is becoming a more nervous animal every day.

Refreshed and restored by a bumper of the Colonel's sherry, a colour came into the hitherto pallid cheeks of the young Frenchman, and a new light into his fine dark eyes ; he propped himself up on a straw pillow, and made an attempt to sing a verse or two of Beranger's *chanson*, "*Les Deux Grenadiers*," but failed with weakness.

"Take courage," said Julian, cheerfully ; "you will soon be well, and we have plenty of fighting before us !"

"Get well ? I should think so, *mon ami* ; did not *M. le Docteur* say there was nothing in the world so hard to kill as a Zouave ? *Pardi*—the Arabs found that out in Africa, and I hope the Russians will find the same thing here before Sebastopol."

Julian did not reply ; he was sipping his

wine from a tin canteen, and for a minute was lost in thought, while replacing carefully the tiny handkerchief of Amy in his pocket-book, from which he had taken it and refolded it.

What did Sir Harry Drake want with that relic of her? Why did he seem so desirous of possessing it, and how came he to be so familiar with her name and crest? They must have met in London, or elsewhere, of course.

He did not exactly love Amy Kerr; but Julian knew that in the past time she was wont to love him, and now an emotion of pique that bordered actually on jealousy came into his heart for a brief space; and then one of his now bitter smiles spread over his face as he remembered himself, and muttered:

“What am I, to muse or brood over such a thing? And how would that young baronet, who doubtless deemed me churlish or eccentric in refusing this handkerchief, laugh me to scorn!”

The quick eye of the Frenchman saw his action and read the expression of his face.

“Aha, *mon camarade*,” said he, laughing, but feebly, “thereby hangs a tale, of course!”

Who is she ? Not your wife—you can't have a wife already ? ”

“ She is neither wife nor love of mine, Achille ; so thus you are, as the sailors say, out of your reckoning.”

“ Your sister, then ? though most fellows, as a rule, make more fuss with the sisters of others.”

“ She is not even my sister,” said Julian, shaking his head and smiling.

“ Then why do you treasure that souvenir so carefully ? ”

“ I can scarcely say, as it only reminds me of a time of sadness and humiliation ; unless it be that it belonged to the only—perhaps the dearest—friend I have on earth ; and I think she would be grateful to me for thus remembering how kind and true she is.”

“ She is true, you think ? ” said the Frenchman, with a grimace.

“ Yes, Achille.”

“ Of course, as a woman, and grateful as a cat ! ”

“ You speak strangely.”

“ I have been soured in my time, that is all,” said the Zouave, turning restlessly on

his bed of straw ; then he laughed again, and added, " now describe her. She has lovely eyes, of course ? "

" Yes—eyes that promise much," replied Julian, entering into the other's spirit.

" *Ma foi—oui*—a pretty woman's eyes always promise many things. Often those who have lost heart—yes, and lost intellect—can make their eyes beam with an expression almost divine. Hence it is that we poor men, poor fools, are so often deceived by them."

" Then you don't think the eyes the index of the soul ? "

" Not of a woman's soul, certainly."

" Why, Achille," said Julian, " what has come to you to-night ? "

" Only some old memories, *camarade* ; that is all."

" Forget them."

" They are hard to forget."

" I was beginning to fear that, in your weak state, the wine, all unused to it as you have been for so long, was affecting you."

" Nay, my friend, it is making a new man of me—a thousand thanks to you."

"You have a harsh opinion of the ladies, Achille."

"Because I have a just one; and as for your fair one of the handkerchief——"

"Do not speak of her, Achille; you know not who she is, and must not judge of her by our camp experiences. She is good and gentle, innocent and true."

"How you talk!" exclaimed the Frenchman, laughing at Julian's earnestness; "how old is your paragon?"

"We shall quarrel if you talk thus; she is not yet twenty."

"*Diable!* why, all women—even girls of her years—have had at least one secret passion, fancy what you will; and many do not confine themselves to one attachment, even at once."

"How sceptical you are of the sex, Richebourg!"

"My scepticism is founded on experience."

"Of the women of Paris, perhaps?"

"I never was in Paris," said Achille, curtly; while Julian's thoughts reverted to the brilliant and attractive Kate of other days; but he had no bitterness on that score now, and

could not endorse the views of the Frenchman, in whom he had more than once detected an almost comical spirit of misogamy that struggled with his naturally gay and joyous temper, which usually led him to make light of everything, even of his wound ; for he had more than once quizzed Julian as being the cause of it, and of the sortie too, by permitting himself to be deluded by the spy, Mouravieff.

In three days the bullet-wound had closed, and already his spirits became buoyant ; he began to patch, with a ready hand, his tattered blue Zouave jacket, and to speak of repairing to the head-quarters of his regiment on the right of the French attack. He was full of sincere gratitude to Julian for all his kindness and genuine *camaraderie* ; and, as strength returned, he became communicative, and began to speak of his past life, thereby giving a clue to some of the bitterness he was wont to express.

“ I was once not without hopes of being something better than a private of the 3rd Zouaves,” said he, on one occasion ; “ but now I am content, for I am alone in the world”

when I get the Cross of the Legion—as I certainly hope one day to do—I will have no one to show it to,” he added, as a shade of melancholy crossed his face; “not even Thibaud, *mon pauvre* Thibaud!”

“Who is he?”

“Was, you should say; the only relative I had in the world—my brother.”

“And he is dead?”

“Dead!” replied Achille, as his chin sunk on his breast, and his eyes seemed to dwell on vacancy.

Julian thought of Gerard, *his* only relative, whom he never more might see, with his fair and boyish face, and his kind, affectionate smile; and somewhat of a fellow-feeling for the speaker filled his heart.

“In some points we resemble each other, Achille,” said he; “there was a time when I little expected to find myself what I am to-day—a private in the Scots Foot Guards.

“You too, then, have a story, *mon ami*?”

“A sad one!”

“Then don’t recall it—forget it if you can.”

But after a time Julian learned that the Zouave had been as suddenly plunged into

poverty as he himself, and from greater wealth if not loftier expectations ; and his nervous soul, which—Frenchman though he was—was of the reticent and overwrought type of the sensitive order, was one of those which can feel keenly, think deeply, and endure many a pang when in contact with the coarse, practical, work-a-day world.

By the death of their parents in Algeria, where their father was a Colonel of Chasseurs d'Afrique, Achille, then a youth of sixteen, and his little brother Thibaud, were left to the care of their uncle, the Marquis de Richebourg, who lived almost in retirement near Lyons, in the old château from which they took their family name, and which is so well known to tourists as a "lion" of the district.

To no more unwilling kinsman could the orphan brothers have been trusted by the dead Colonel than this elder brother, who by nature was stern, cold, and, dwelling apart from all in the seclusion of his great château beside the Rhone, regarded with extreme disfavour the change their presence was likely to effect in his lonely and loveless existence, as he was notorious in his neighbourhood for his lack of

geniality and natural affection ; yet Achille was to be the heir of his title and his possessions.

A book-worm and student, the Marquis spent most of his time in his library, and isolated as the brothers were from all companions and playmates, when not in the hands of their tutors, they missed sorely the affection of their father and the tenderness of their mother, and a species of quiet sadness fell upon them—on little Thibaud particularly—which was sad to behold in one so young and, by nature, affectionate.

Accustomed only to caresses where the Chasseurs d'Afrique had been quartered, or in the tented camps in hot and arid Algeria, they were wont to wander, hand in hand, and full of wonder, with hushed voices and quiet steps, through the apparently endless rooms of that vast and most isolated château, which is actually built *in* the Rhone, for a great part of the edifice rests on a bridge or series of arches beneath which the river flows, the swiftest river in France, sweeping away towards Lyons through the most picturesque scenery, winding almost entirely between rocks and mountains,

vineyards, châteaux, and pretty cottages, embowered among beautiful trees.

The court of the château was covered with the softest green turf, and its ancient garden was ever gay with flowers and sparkling fountains, while its apartments remained, and yet remain, unaltered since it had been the favourite abode of Diana de Poitiers, whose drinking cup is yet there, made of that famous Venetian glass which was supposed to possess the rare property of breaking into a hundred pieces if any poisonous liquid was poured into it.

Hand in hand Achille and Thibaud wandered through the great rooms, the latter clinging to the former at times, in childish awe of grim Richebours of past times, who looked down on them both from their frames, out of helmets or over huge ruffs; at the rare armour, the beautiful enamels, the antique cabinets and mirrors, for the furniture was mostly in the gorgeous taste of the days of Louis Quatorze.

The imagination of Achille re-peopled the now silent rooms with witty courtiers, splendid French chevaliers, wearing easily as a glove the armour that now hung disused on the walls, and tilting at each other or at the ring in the

grassy court below; for the château, though inhabited, remained unmodernised, and had been in more recent times the resort of some of the most gifted men in Europe, and had its memories of Bolingbroke when in exile, of Voltaire and Rousseau.

As Achille grew older it impressed him with a species of melancholy, as his busy fancy lingered over the princely, the bright, the gifted, the brave and the beautiful, who had been gathered to the silent tomb, and whose chief representative now was the silent, moody, and morose old man whose heir he was to be; for there were not wanting those among the domestics who sought to impress that important fact upon his mind.

It was a glorious inheritance—one to be proud of—and though Achille shrunk from the contemplation of the actual time when his dark and gloomy uncle would pass away, he could not help picturing a future to himself and Thibaud more splendid, and certainly more joyous, than the present; and when he might bring to Richebourg—but from where he knew not then—a bride as beautiful as any whose portraits were empanelled there.

When Achille was eighteen and Thibaud but ten years old, the brothers were separated, and the former was sent to travel, in care of a tutor, whose orders were that he should leave nothing undone to perfect his education.

"Thus, Monsieur Achille," said that personage, a poor young Abbé, "I shall leave you, I hope, able to take with due dignity the place of your forefathers."

But little Thibaud looked forward with dismay to being left in that huge château without a companion, and clung, weeping like a girl, to the neck of Achille, when he bade him adieu, and the carriage bore him away to Lyons.

Music had ever been a passion with Achille, and at Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere he gave himself up to the study of the art with enthusiasm; nightly he frequented the opera, and relinquished the classics and everything else, to the great dismay of his tutor, spending the whole of his time at the piano, or, to the annoyance of all about him, in the study of the cornet.

He could little then foresee the use to which he was yet to put these studies to which he gave his whole soul, till M. l'Abbé began to

fear some such terrible fiasco as the heir of the Marquis de Richebourg taking to music as a profession, and perhaps throwing himself at the feet of some artful *prima donna*.

So passed the days pleasantly enough, till a black-edged letter arrived at Vienna. It came from a notary in Lyons, and announced the death of his uncle, who had been found dead at the writing-table in his library, with his head bent over an open volume. The notary further urged that he should return at once, and congratulated him as the fifteenth Marquis of Richebourg.

These sudden tidings shocked the young idler greatly, of course. No bond of regard existed between him and the dead man, certainly; yet his face and figure came somewhat upbraidingly to memory, and in the generosity of his nature Achille began to marvel and speculate whether the coldness of the late Marquis was not due to some unconscious shortcoming on his own part; but then he was equally cold and repellent to the fair-haired and sweetly dispositioned little Thibaud, who was loved by all.

However, a greater shock awaited him when he passed through Lyons and reached the grand

old château in the Rhone, to find that there was another Marquis de Richebourg in possession ; that his uncle had been secretly married to a woman on his own estate, and their son was now the legal and undisputed heir to everything.

“ No will was left, monsieur,” said the notary, “ so you and Monsieur Thibaud are totally unprovided for ; but I have no doubt that through the generosity of Monsieur le Marquis ——”

“ Enough of this, M. le Notaire,” said Achille with intense bitterness of soul ; “ my late uncle has cruelly deceived me, but I shall not take the value of a demi-franc from him who has supplanted me—this Marquis, the son of a mere *blanchisseuse* of La Croix Rousse ! ”

“ Take heart, my friend,” said the notary, pitying Achille, who looked pale as death, and whose eyes had in them a dangerous gleam ; “ you are young and in some profession ——”

“ I have been taught none, and am too much embittered in soul to learn one,” said Achille, whose heart was swelling with natural resentment ; “ and but for little Thibaud, I should become a soldier, like my father before me.”

“ M. le Marquis comes hither to reside per-

manently to-morrow," said the notary, gently, "and if you, Monsieur Achille, will but meet him ——"

"May I perish where I stand if I do! *Sacre Dieu*, M. le Notaire, you know not the temper of him you are speaking to!" cried Achille with fury, as he took the hand of his startled and terrified brother, and turned his back for ever upon the stately abode that is moated by the Rhone, feeling, with justice, that it would be altogether an intolerable thing to live there, even if invited, which he was *not*, a dependent upon this most unexpected kinsman—the uneducated son of a peasant-woman—a dependent in the place where all had been wont to pay him homage and respect as its future lord and master.

He threw aside in scorn the mourning he had assumed for the late Marquis, and taking with him Thibaud, a weak, delicate, and ailing boy, whose system had never fairly recovered an illness contracted in Algeria, he obtained a humble lodging in Lyons, and strove to maintain himself and his brother by teaching music.

Of the last money he had received but a few five-franc pieces remained, and when he looked

at Thibaud's pallid cheek and feverishly bright eyes, he thought, with terror, if want should come upon them ere he found pupils ; and ere three days had passed in their dull and gloomy lodging, he began to pine for the beautiful view from the windows of Richebourg, the green wooded mountains, and the swift blue Rhone ; for the interior of Lyons—however grand when viewed from a distance—is merely great stacks of quaint and lofty houses, with narrow, dull, and repulsive lanes between them.

While seeking for pupils, he thought of the poor Abbé's warnings and fears concerning his musical propensities, and more than once he lingered before the theatre in the Place des Célestins, and that behind the Hôtel de Ville, wondering whether he might then turn his accomplishments on the cornet to account.

“ Be of good courage, *mon ami*,” said the friendly notary, whom he met as he was returning despondently homeward, “ I have got a pupil for you—a young man who is as crazed concerning music as yourself.”

“ Thanks, M. le Notaire,” exclaimed Achille ;
“ and this pupil —— ”

"Is the only son of M. Tristan de Pomignon."

"The wealthy merchant in the Place Bellecour?"

"The same; take with you my card, present yourself there to-morrow, and make your own terms."

The thanks he gave the notary were genuine and earnest; for he had but one thought at present—food, and, if possible, little luxuries for Thibaud; yet he sighed amid his gratitude—it was so different to indulge in a passion for music as the heir of the Marquis de Richebourg, and to use it now as a means for existence.

"Would that I could help you, dear Achille," said Thibaud, as the former was setting forth on the morrow; "I feel so miserable to sit here idle, useless, and a burden on you."

"Do not talk thus, Thibaud, but try and get well and strong, dear fellow. I shall then give up this trade of teaching, and we shall both become soldiers! What say to that, my Chasseur d'Afrique?"

"I shall never live to be a soldier," replied Thibaud, wistfully; "but I shall go to *Notre*

Dame de Fourviers, and pray for your success, Achille."

With a sinking heart, for his position was a novel one, and his whole soul recoiled from it, Achille presented himself duly at the magnificent mansion in the Place Bellecour.

Young Tristan was the only son of M. de Pompignon ; he was a youth of fifteen, whose present fancy was music ; the terms were liberal beyond the expectations of Achille. Monsieur was polite, even kind, and hoped his patronage would lead to something more for the young music master, of whose story he had heard a rumour, which he could not quite understand ; but then Monsieur de Pompignon was very deaf.

His son was delighted with Achille, and the lessons of the first and second day passed over very pleasantly. On the third, the door of the music-room was opened suddenly, but softly, and a young lady entered.

" My sister H  l  ne—Monsieur Richebourg," said the pupil.

She surveyed Achille for a moment very superciliously, and returned the profound bow he gave her with a response that was worse

than no response at all. It was merely the slightest inclination of her haughty but certainly beautiful little head, as she was about to withdraw.

"Stay a moment Hélène," said her brother, "and hear how I am progressing."

"I would rather be excused," she replied curtly, and retired.

She was a brilliant blonde, in the full bloom of budding womanhood, but with all her beauty, which was rare, high, and delicate in its degree, Achille felt, in the novelty of his altered circumstances and humble position, irritated and ruffled more than he would have cared to confess. But he had many affronts, perhaps unintentionally, put upon him. In the drawing-room and elsewhere, visitors came and went, but the poor *maître de musique* was introduced to none!

Pride was the besetting sin of Mademoiselle de Pompignon; thus, when she had more than once passed Achille in the street (attended by an obsequious and gaudily liveried footman) without seeming to see him, and had twice sailed out of the music-room when he entered it, his heart became inflamed with resentment

against her, and he began to loathe the daily task of attendance on her brother ; and yet she was so beautiful, so graceful and attractive, that he would have given life itself to win a smile from her, for she seemed the realisation of the bride of his boyish day-dreams, that he had hoped to lead from the altar to Richebourg, and no fairer face than hers was pictured in the gallery there.

Thus, as resentment mingled with his admiration of her, he treated her with the most marked coldness ; he never seemed to care to meet her eye, and, whenever occasion served, studiously ignored her existence.

She saw that he was handsome, accomplished, and had an air of distinction there was no denying ; thus she in turn became piqued, and resolved to conquer him if she could, even though he, in her haughty eyes, was only a poor music master, and on this she was the more resolved after hearing a reply of Achille to her brother—a reply which he intended for her ears.

“ I should like you to hear *Hélène* play ; her performance is as sweet as her own face.”

Achille made no response.

"You admire it, don't you, M. Achille?" persisted the boy.

"The coldness of its expression chills me; pardon, M. Tristan, but a face without a smile could never charm me."

Next day, on entering the music-room, Hélène, who had never done more than give the merest bow to Achille, and then only when in the house, presented her hand to him with a bright smile. To the latter he made no response, and though his heart beat lightly, he barely touched the lovely little hand she offered.

From that day a change came over her. She condescended to make occasionally a few remarks, and her proud eyes seemed to soften when they met and even seemed to seek the gaze of Achille. She hovered about her brother, as if interested in his performance and progression; occasionally she ran her fingers coquettishly over the keys, touching those of Achille and sending a thrill to his heart, where all resentment had died away, and engaged in unmistakable *céillades* with the most charming eyes in the world.

Achille was perplexed; he now loved her,

and longed to press her to his heart—to kiss but her hand ; yet no expression of eye and no inflexion of voice betrayed him, or lured him, as yet, from the part he had resolved to act.

Hélène, though proud, was by nature a coquette, and as she looked at Achille her eyes, wont always to command admiration, met only a handsome face that regarded her changed manner with an apparently half-interested, half scrutinising, and wholly indifferent expression, as the owner thereof, after a low bow, but without a smile, always turned to his pupil.

Hélène would then colour with secret anger, and felt instinctively a spirit of defiance grow within her ; but little could she conceive that the young man's heart was beating wildly with joy at the very sense of her presence !

“ Who is this so-called Richebourg,” she thought, “ who dares to treat me, the daughter of the richest merchant in Lyons, thus ? ”

Moreover, there was always a perfect calmness in his voice that led the imperious little beauty almost to hate him.

“ I shall crush him yet ! ” thought she.

So between these two this strange kind of game at cross-purposes went on for many days, Achille, the while, fast learning to love the girl with all his heart and soul—most hopeless though his love might be—and she, though not unwilling that he should adore her very shadow, like a coquette as she was, contriving to remain perfectly heart-whole herself.

At last there came a day, one of those days which people seldom forget, when, by the lingering of her hand in his, and the down-cast expression of her quivering eyelids, he read, as he fancied, an admission of the mutual love with which he had at all hazards inspired her.

“I am sure of her now,” thought he, “and shall put her to the test; but what will people say of me for betraying her father’s confidence and trust?”

“Accept this from me, mademoiselle,” said he next day, placing in her hand a beautiful bouquet composed of white azaleas, tea rose-buds, and the tenderest fern, with a lovely scarlet camellia and sprig of pink and white heath in the centre.

“Oh, thank you, Monsieur Achille—it is

charming!" she exclaimed, while her eyes sparkled, and with a triumphant smile she buried her proud sweet face in the fragrant mass of flowers.

On the morrow she wore in the bosom of her dress the scarlet camellia with the sprig of pink and white heath, and the heart of the donor leaped within him at the sight.

"Your pink and white heath is still fresh and beautiful, Monsieur Achille," said she, looking coquettishly down at her bosom.

"You know what it means," said he tremulously.

"Means—how?"

"In the language of flowers?"

"I know what pale heath means."

"That 'I love you.'"

"But the pink implies doubt, does it not, Monsieur Achille?"

"Not so far as I am concerned, mademoiselle," said he in a voice still more tremulous.

She eyed him with a mingled expression of face, in which shyness, coyness, and triumph might be read.

"Pardon me—Hélène," said he with clasped hands.

“For what?”

“What I am about to say—that I love you—and you—you love me, do you not?” he urged, softly taking her hands in his, while his heart thrilled within him.

“Do not ask me,” she exclaimed, freeing herself from his clasp with a sharp wrench that gave him a real pang of pain; “this is too much,” she added, with crimsoned cheeks, “I shall leave you with your pupil—here comes Tristan.”

Thus she left him in doubt and wretchedness, with the chilling fear that he had miscalculated the real state of her heart, and had transgressed too far, or too abruptly. He passed the day as one in a dream—in a long nightmare; but “for a woman to know that a man loves her, even if she does not love that man, is a dangerous thing,” says some one.

Hélène, however, did not avoid him on the morrow; but entered the music-room as usual, and encouraged by this, he ventured to take her hand and say:

“You will forgive the words, the presumption, the madness of yesterday!”

"I have nothing to forgive, monsieur," said she, with her long eyelashes drooping.

"Then you pardon me, dearest Hélène?"

"Oh, Achille!" she sighed, and in another moment his arm went round her, and her bright face was nestling in his neck.

"You love me, Hélène!" said he in a low and impassioned voice, while his pulses throbbed like lightning; while time seemed to stand still, and the room to whirl round them.

Her voice responded in the faintest whisper, but it gave no denial.

"Hush—don't—Tristan is coming!" she exclaimed hurriedly, and withdrew. He loved her—she had conquered at last.

We fear the lessons of that day were sadly blundered indeed.

After a day or two of tumultuous joy on the part of Achille Richebourg—joy that was, nevertheless, clouded by a fear of their separation by the sudden interference of her father, M. de Pompignon, he resolved to ask her to betroth herself to him, even only for a time—a promise to be redeemed if Fate smiled on him, or his horrible cousin, the son of the *blanchisseuse*

at La Croix Rousse, died, or her family gave their consent, to gain which he believed the rank of his own might favour him ; and this promise he resolved they should invest with some solemnity by mutually exchanging before the altar of the nearest church, where no eyes but those of Heaven should see them.

Full of the romance of this idea, he came one morning earlier than usual, ere young Tristan was in his place, and urged her to meet him, in the tenderest voice and manner he could assume ; but it was all as his heart felt, and he pressed her hand between his own.

“ Meet me, dearest H  l  ne, in the church of *Notre Dame de Fourviers* to-morrow.”

“ Why Achilles ? ”

“ I will tell you when we are there.”

“ At what hour ? ” she asked in her low rich voice,

“ Noon.”

“ That is impossible.”

“ Why, dearest H  l  ne ? ”

“ Because,” said she with a mocking burst of cruel laughter, “ I am to be married there at that very hour to-morrow.”

“ Married ! What jest is this, H  l  ne ? ”

But she only uttered a little hysterical cry of alarm, and fairly fled from the room, as M. de Pompignon suddenly appeared with a very dark expression of face indeed.

“She does not jest, Monsieur Richebourg,” said he haughtily and sternly, “though I am utterly at a loss to understand this scene. Any way, we shall require your services no more; there are the Napoleons I owe you—go!—and as for Mademoiselle de Pompignon, she is to be married to-morrow to Colonel Clermont. Her engagement and espousal have long been a family affair. I need say no more, especially to you!”

And with incredible hauteur he threw open the door of the room, as pitiless as his daughter was in her pride, her coquetry and triumph.

“And this insult is to me,” exclaimed Achille; “to me, who but a few months ago believed myself Marquis de Richebourg!”

How Achille got over the next few weeks he scarcely knew; but he looked for no more pupils, and found occupation enough in attending to the wants, and, as they proved, to the last hours of his little brother Thibaud, whose illness, a species of wasting away, he

had partly failed to remark, so absorbed had he been of late with his passion for Hélène ; and when the poor boy died in his arms, much of remorse mingled with his hate of the girl who had so befooled him.

He had now no tie on earth to bind him to France, and a few months after the death of Thibaud saw him a soldier in the 3rd Zouaves, fighting under the gallant Breton, François Canrobert, against the Arab tribes of the Bouaoun, in the Djerma Pass and elsewhere.

He had seen terrible things done on service there ; Arab families smoked to death in caverns, and had to watch the slow death of Zouaves condemned to *le coq Gaulois* ; the torture of being suspended by the wrist from a tree with the toe of one foot resting on a cannon ball, and the exposure of the eyes and face to a scorching sun.

He was one of those who escaped in the dreadful snowstorm on the heights of Sakhamondi, when so many perished miserably on the march amid the deep and horrible ravines, and he was afterwards one of those who, under a blazing and fierce African noon, stormed the steep and sun-baked rocks of

Narah, when the dark Kabyles, who hewed off, without mercy, the heads of all who fell into their power, manned the heights with their long matchlocks, and, in places inaccessible apparently as the eyries of the eagles, held in check the flower of Canrobert's army for seven hours, nor might they have given way even then, but for the notes of an Arab trumpet that was heard, as darkness fell, sounding the *retreat* that was familiar to the enemy.

Then they gave way on all hands; the dreadful heights were carried, after three columns of infantry had failed before them, but it was not until the pursuit was over, amid a thunderstorm in which the din of the French flying artillery seemed to mingle in blasphemous rivalry with that of the firmament, that it became known that he who sounded the retreat was Achille Richebourg, of the 3rd Zouaves; and in his modesty of spirit it would never have been known but for the clamour made by his comrade, Renée, about the circumstance.

All said he deserved the Cross of the Legion; but he was only to receive a medal in common

with the rest of the hill-stormers who had distinguished themselves, and this they were to receive from the fair hands of a lady—the wife of the General commanding in the city of Algiers.

The day of this ceremony was a glorious one, when the troops in thousands, bronzed well-nigh to negro blackness by Algerian service, were massed in columns at the foot of the hill on which the city stands—the Spahis in madder-coloured burnous and white turbans, their long tasselled lances glittering in the cloudless sun ; the dashing Chasseurs d'Afrique in blue dolmans ; the Zouves in their well-known costume, and infantry of the line, dark and sombre, in long blue coats, buttoned back. In the rear of all these masses, quivering apparently in the sunshine, rose the square towers, the mosques, and minarets, above each other, like flights of white steps from the blue ocean to the summit of the hill, four hundred feet in height—Algiers, for ages the city of the pirates.

Each soldier was summoned in turn to receive his medal, under the tricolour, amid a brilliant staff, where stood the donor, Madame

la Générale, said to be a woman of very great beauty. As that of Achille was pinned upon the breast of his faded, frayed, and blood-bespattered blue jacket by two snowy little hands, he looked in her face, and saw the dark violet eyes, the bright golden hair, the lips fresh as a rosebud, and the alluring smile of—Hélène!

Embrowned by service in scorching Africa, his neck bare, his eyes fierce and keen as those of a hawk, from facing daily peril, she did not at first recognise the young man she had so cruelly deceived; nor did she become certain of his existence till she inquired his name, and then her interest in him ceased, for she was as heartless as she was beautiful.

“And you saw her no more?” said Julian, as the Zouave paused in his story.

“Never more but once,” he replied, as a dark shade fell on his face. “Near these same luckless heights of Narah, our staff, when reconnoitring, had been suddenly attacked in time of truce by a horde of furious Kabyles. It took place about nightfall, and in the hasty charge to break through them, and the hot, mad gallop rearward, Clermont lost his wife.

“ Some of the 3rd were ordered to cover this retreat in skirmishing order, closing ever and anon in rallying squares, when attacked ; and in a place where the wild cactus and the orange-trees grew thick, *Rénée* and I found *Hélène*, thrown from her horse, and dying, with a matchlock bullet in her beautiful breast.

“ I put my canteen to her pale lips, gently as a mother might do it to that of her ailing baby ; I strove to make her swallow a little of the fetid water—fetid after that long day’s hot march—which it contained ; too late—too late ! She was beyond human aid.

“ The pale moonbeams fell upon her dying and sharpened features. Hatè and the jealousy that roused pride and wounded self-esteem were all gone from me now, and only a great and holy pity remained. *Hélène*—*Hélène* ! she lay between death and me ! There was a fierce but very forlorn triumph in having her all to myself. She, that had aroused my first love, and played with that love in her heedless vanity. Did she know me ? Surely, for she murmured my name, and I wept as I heard

it—heard it on the once lovely lips that scorned me in the past time; and she fell, to all appearance, asleep, with her head on my shoulder. Alas! it was the last sleep that must come, inexorably, to us all! And so, *mon camarade*, it came to pass that by the fortune of war, and the turn of events, the fair Hélène died that terrible death in the African wilderness—died in my arms—and then we buried her, scooping her uncouth grave with our sword-bayonets. We piled brambles over it, as a protection against wild animals; we said beside it the prayers our mothers had taught us when we were young (though, *ma foi!* the army didn't pray much in Africa); and with heavy hearts—mine was as a heart of lead—followed in all haste our comrades."

Achille Richebourg was too volatile by nature to be long depressed by the story of his unfortunate love affair, which the handkerchief of Amy had been the means of evoking; thus, when on the following day he took his departure, limping sorely with his wound, to rejoin his comrades on the right flank of the French military force, he was singing Beranger's

song of the "Two Grenadiers," with its refrain:—

"Vieux grenadier suivant un vieux soldat,
Vieux grenadier suivant un vieux soldat!" &c. &c.

And he waved his turban in farewell to Julian, as he disappeared between the French camp and Lord Raglan's headquarters.

When again they met it was on a day when many were doomed to part to meet no more, in this world, at all events.

CHAPTER II.

“THE SOLDIERS’ BATTLE.”

THE story of Achille Richebourg, had, upon Julian, the effect of making him repine less at his own obscure fate ; in misfortune he was not quite alone, even in the small world of the Crimea.

The Frenchman had been done out of his inheritance and hereditary title by a species of trick, (but a perfectly legal one), even as he and Gerard had been cheated of their birthright. Achille had lost his grand château upon the Rhone, even as Julian had lost, prospectively, that which would have come to him in due time, stately and baronial Deloraine ; and he had been deluded by the girl he loved, and whom he had learned to hate, and then to pity, in the end.

Now both were private soldiers, with little to hope for but death ; their stories were, Julian thought, a little identical, and we all

know how "a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind."

"I never heard a love tale so peculiar," thought he ; but he knew nothing of Salome, and the love story of Gerard, which mystery rendered stranger still.

November was creeping on now, and daily the dull routine of death, if one may use the term, was in progress before Sebastopol, where our soldiers were actually becoming careless of shot and shell, so used were they to the sound of them whistling about and falling or exploding near them ; for night and day the Russians fired on our working parties with their heaviest ordnance.

Thus the trenches were pushed more briskly by night than by day. Those of the British were nearly five miles in extent, full of zig-zags, batteries, and parallels by which all the surrounding ground was broken up, and the night duty there was harassing in the extreme, and many men perished amid the mud and snow when the winter season came. But the soldiers always spoke hopefully and cheerfully of taking Sebastopol ere the snow fell, of burning the city and ships, of blowing

up the forts and taking prisoners a vast garrison, that was being perpetually replaced by *fresh* troops ; but many a weary month of cold, disease, and ghastly havoc were to pass away ere the bells of the doomed city were to ring their last peal.

After enduring a whole day in the trenches, a day when, what with whirling eddies of smoke, splinters of stones, shells; and gabions, the crashing of shot, thirst, hunger, and toil, he could scarcely stand, Julian, who had been with a working party of the Guards, on being dismissed, approached Sir Harry Drake, when the latter was just about to enter his hut, and, according the usual salute, said, with a little air of confusion or doubt, for his heart was still in some respects a proud one :

"Excuse me, Sir Harry, I have my earnest thanks to give you—with something more."

"For what have you to thank me, my man?" asked the young baronet, with a tone of impatience, to which the toil and worry of the past day perhaps contributed. "Speak quickly," he added, as he unstrapped his field-glass, sword, and revolver, and tossed them to his servant.

"Permit me to return those five shillings you lent me; I only got the money this morning from the pay-sergeant."

Blank amazement for a moment was expressed in the face of Sir Harry, and then anger, as Julian added, "You kindly lent them to me at Balaclava."

"Lent them! I *gave* them to you, fellow—what the devil do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"Please not to adopt this tone to me, Sir Harry," said Julian patiently. "I took them as a loan to get some wine for a wounded Zouave."

"I cannot accept them," said the officer in a milder tone, but with a bearing of considerable hauteur.

"Then I shall either leave them here on the grass or give them to your servant, if you will permit me."

"You shall do neither, and by Heaven if ——" began Sir Harry hotly, but changing his tone, he said, "You are one of the oddest fellows I ever met. Here—give me the money—thanks."

He thrust the cash into his purse with some irritation of manner, for in connection

with Julian he felt an undefinable sense of annoyance. In all this there only seemed to him an affectation of equality repugnant to discipline and their relative positions. Yet somehow in Julian's eyes, air, and bearing there was something that impressed him with a certain sense of respect.

"Have you anything more to say?" he asked the latter, as he lingered.

"Only this: you conferred a favour, a kindness, on me, Sir Harry, in lending me that little sum, which I can never have it in my power to confer on you—our lines in life are so far apart."

"I should think so," was the somewhat haughty reply.

Julian said this gravely and modestly, and saluting Sir Harry (who barely accorded a response) turned away; but both were mistaken; neither could foresee what a few hours were to bring forth, or for how much the baronet and lieutenant-colonel (for the Guards had then, this privileged rank) was to be indebted to the private soldier.

With an intense sense of humiliation at the general result of this interview, though

aware that he was bound in honour to return the trifle lent him, poor Julian flung himself, supperless—he had given his rations to the hungry children of a slain comrade—after a day of toil and peril, on his straw pallet, and strove to sleep; and in truth, Sir Harry Drake and his cousin, Bertie Slingsby, who shared one hut, were not in a much better predicament, and this was the sort of life for which these gay young Guardsmen had relinquished London with all its glories, lawn-parties, dinners, and balls, the Row, the Zoo, Collar-days, and drawing-rooms, hunting, and shooting—even the most moderate comforts of civilised existence.

This was on the Saturday evening that preceded a tremendous attack upon the besiegers. Into Sebastopol, upon the *open* or uninvested side, 50,000 additional troops from Odessa had been poured in the first days of November, and to General Ostensacken, who commanded them, Siberia and degradation were threatened by the Emperor Nicholas if the Allies—but chiefly “the Island curs”—were not destroyed, and the siege raised.

All the saints of “Holy Russia” were

invoked, and, from the pulpits of Sebastopol, to those who fell, the crowns of martyrdom were promised ; to those who survived and conquered, the vast spoil, the treasures of Hindostan, which were alleged to be stored up in the camp of the British, who were described as veritable monsters, who committed upon all who fell into their hands cruelties conceivable only to the imagination of such bloodthirsty and abominable heretics, whose utter extermination would be pleasing alike in the eyes of God and of the Emperor.

Vast quantities of potent raki were served out to all the troops, the further to flush their zeal, inflame their passions, and deaden all sense of danger ; and in this spirit, cautiously and noiselessly—the tramp of their footsteps muffled by the clangour of all the bells of the churches, among them the great bell that now tolls the hours in the camp of Aldershot, and their motions and numbers concealed by a thick mist—the mighty sortie of 50,000 men stole out of Sebastopol, and guided, it was supposed, by spies, descended into the deep ravines near the British right flank, the weakest point of the Allies' position.

Moving onward swiftly and silently, this mighty mass, with its accompanying service of artillery, came upon the front as well as the flank of the British, some 12,000 of whom were all the force that was there to oppose it.

Out of the mist and drizzling rain came the dark masses with their red flashing musketry, about three in the morning, falling in a most unexpected quarter on our slender pickets, which were at once driven in by an overwhelming force and their withering fire. Knapsacks, haversacks, and every encumbrance were cast aside, and though many of our muskets, wetted by exposure overnight, failed to explode, the fire became general on both sides, rolling away in sputtering lines of sudden light towards the valley of the caverns, as the whole army rushed to arms, warned of a terrible conflict, and the bloody day of Inkermann, the 5th of November, stole darkly and cloudily in.

With the general narration of that eventful field we shall not concern ourselves, save so far as our story may require.

When the alarm sounded in the dark, and

the brigade of Guards sprang to their arms, two men in this little town of tents and huts thought of the same girl, who then was so far away—of bright little Amy Kerr. Julian's memory flashed home to her as the only friend he had on earth beside his brother;—yet neither might know his fate if he fell; and Sir Harry Drake, who loved her with his whole heart, had just penned to her a half-despairing epistle, which he now feared might be his last.

As the drums beat to arms, and the fire of the pickets was heard in the distance, he gave a farewell glance in the dim light at a packet (on which lay the splinter of a shell, improvised as a letter-weight) which he kept perpetually sealed, and addressed to Amy Kerr, prepared for any casualty.

How well he knew the contents of it, even to a rose-leaf. For there were flowers, now scentless, brown, and dead, that spoke of pleasant days of hope and joy spent at Kew and Richmond, and of rides and rambles in shady English summer lanes; of buds begged from bouquets amid the crush of Belgravian ball-rooms; petty yet glorified treasures—among

them actually a lock of Amy's bright brown hair, cut off in play by Kate ; and with them a letter—a long, long one—telling her of a love that would never change, and full of hope and trust in a blessed God, and the happiness of days to come.

He looked at it as the long roll died away on the drum, and the din of the firing and of many voices grew louder ; he thought over all this once again, put on his bearskin and sword, and went forth as the grim morning of Inkermann dawned in the cold, grey, lowering sky, whose darkening many would never see.

His cousin, Bertie Slingsby, practically or by force of habit, deposited a few postage-stamps beside a letter that *he*, too, had written, but now had not the time to close—a letter to his mother, then asleep in some Belgravian mansion, all unconscious of the immediate peril that threatened him, her only son ; and, drawing his sword, rushed to join his company, high in heart and spirit.

Bertie had firm, bold, dark grey eyes, a splendid moustache, and the gay careless air of a handsome young fellow, a drawing-room pet, of the Household Brigade, whom women

and the world had done their best to spoil, and yet had failed to do so.

"And now to slate these Russian beggars again, dear Harry!" he exclaimed, as the Coldstreams formed upon the right of the Scots Fusiliers, and the noble brigade was formed by battalions; but, unfortunately for themselves, on this morning all, or nearly all, the officers of the Guards came forth in *scarlet*, with their epaulettes on, while their men were clad in their dark grey overcoats, and such was the case in many regiments of the line.

By this time the pickets, fighting resolutely, had retreated to a small redoubt which had not been armed, though intended for two guns; thus the defence of the ravine, which offered such an easy access to our camp, had been neglected. The danger of this had not been unforeseen by Sir De Lacy Evans; but before aught could be done to secure the pass, so slender was our force, and so vast the ground they had to cover, the Russians were through it, and, had they been successful, it is much to be feared that the Crimean War had ended then, and that the Allies must have embarked or surrendered.

Belching forth death and mutilation with every red flash that streaked the blended mist and smoke, the Russian artillery now opened fire from the slopes of those heights to which they had stolen unseen, while all the batteries in the town at the same moment opened a terrific cannonade on the camp, tearing the tents to rags, knocking the huts to pieces, and making a dreadful havoc among our troops, as they formed and advanced into action.

From the embankment of the little redoubt, the men of the 55th Regiment poured a steady fire upon the advancing enemy, till a column of the latter, outnumbering them by forty to one, captured it at a rush, drove them back, and mercilessly slew every wounded man they found, either by stabbing him with bayonet or dashing out his brains by the butt-end of the musket; and but for the succour afforded by the 41st Welsh and the 49th Hertfordshire, which now came rushing and cheering into action, not a man of the brave 55th could have escaped the human tide of drunk and maddened Muscovites that surged around them.

Forming line with splendid rapidity as they

came on, these two regiments poured in a steady volley with their Minie rifles, and, heedless of the fact that the Russians before them were massed in ponderous columns, looking dark and sombre with their black glazed caps and long *capotes*, they made one desperate and headlong charge with their levelled bayonets, and plunging into the first horde, hurled it in confusion and tumult back upon the rear in a hand to hand and muzzle to muzzle *mêlée*.

This advantage was scarcely won ere the terrible fire of the cannon hurled both regiments back, while the din of battle grew every moment louder, deeper, and wilder, in the echoing valley, the rocks and caverns of which tossed the sounds from side to side, and the obscurity of which was such that our troops, when pressing onward to the attack, through mist and smoke, among stunted trees and tall brushwood, had only the red flashes of the musketry to direct them; thus many corps did not see the enemy till close upon their bayonets.

Lord Raglan, the generals of division, and brigadiers were all on horseback now; day

was fairly in, and the whole army was in motion. General Strangeways brought up a sufficient force of our artillery to silence even the Russian guns, but the crest of the hill was so shrouded in smoke, and encumbered by thick gorse, that the guns were unlimbered and wheeled round with great difficulty.

In one part of this most confused field of battle, the smoke and mist suddenly rose like a curtain, and a vast Russian column appeared within ten yards or less of the muzzles of a brigade of our guns under Major Townsend. As he was quite unsupported, he gave the order to retire, but ere it could be obeyed the flat-caps were upon him with the bayonet. Yet out of his six guns only one was taken, though a shell burst in the midst of them and dashed his head to pieces. Elsewhere, brave old General Strangeways, who had his legs smashed by a cannon-shot, was bleeding to death on a stretcher.

By this time, in another quarter, the brigade of Guards was heavily pressed by the enemy, who were crouching in thousands among some dense brushwood, out of which their musketry came in one incessant blaze of

fire, mowing down men on every hand, till the 20th (whilom Kingsley's regiment) came on with its "Minden yell," together with the 47th or Lancashire, both of which had failed in another effort to keep, after they had retaken, the wretched redoubt, the whole ground about which was now literally heaped with dead, as again the Russians slaughtered every wounded man when the two slender battalions fell back.

Of the noble 20th some 200 men had just come in from the trenches, after twenty-four hours of toil and exposure to the rain and wind; but the whole, with the brigade of Guards, led by the Duke of Cambridge, rushed with fury into the redoubt, and, charging over piles of dead and dying, retook it at the point of the bayonet, and from that moment it would have been retained by a handful of the Coldstreams against more than 6,000 Russians, but they were surrounded in it and literally cut off.

Three times, with hoarse and wild hurrahs and strangely savage cries, the dark columns of flat-capped and grey-coated Russians hurled all their fury against the redoubt, the ground within which was filled with sodden corpses

and slippery with blood and brains ; and three times the Guardsmen hurled them back with slaughter ; but other troops, all more or less maddened with raki, came pouring out of Sebastopol, and protracted the conflict everywhere.

The handful of Coldstreams, isolated now, fought back to back till their ammunition was expended, and then they resorted to hurling stones. It was then that two or three officers, of whom Sir Harry Drake was one, formed the brave little band in line, and, leading them in a bayonet charge, burst headlong through the Russian lines, which parted like the waves of the sea before them, and they rejoined the Household Brigade, but not until more than 1,000 of the brutal enemy had bit the dust beneath their steel.

Though men were falling fast on every side, before and behind him, "and human lives were lavished everywhere," in Julian's breast that kind of tension of the heart young soldiers feel when first under fire had passed away ; he felt only the fierce desire to close in and grapple with the enemy, to overbear and tread him under foot ; and he continued

to load and fire with mechanical rapidity till his arms ached.

Amid the eddying smoke he saw Colonel Kingsmuir riding at full and furious speed, with some orders from Lord Raglan. He had lost his cocked hat, and his thin white hair was streaming behind him. Julian gave one wistful glance after the kind old Colonel, whom he had known so well in the past time, that literally seemed to have been ages ago.

Well, thank God, he had saved his life on that terrible night in the advanced trenches, a return in some sort for his kindness on many an occasion ; but, chief of all, at that time when the tame otter was slain, and he saved him—Julian—from perhaps smiting down his own father !

His fast receding figure vanished amid the smoke on the errand he might not be fated to accomplish. It was to bring on the 4th Division to the relief of the Guards. Its commander was the brave Scottish veteran, Sir George Cathcart, who had served on the fields of Lutzen, Leipzig, and Waterloo, and, sword in hand, he led the division to the charge against a column of 9,000 Russians.

In that charge he fell, shot through the heart, and, together with his aide-de-camp, who sought to succour him, or protect his body, was literally cut to pieces.

Slowly now, and disputing every inch of the ground, our troops began to fall back upon their lines. "Close in, men; close in!" was the incessant cry of the officers, as gaps occurred in the fast thinning ranks, for the "loose formation" of to-day was then unknown, and Britons believed in the magic touch of the elbow, and being shoulder to shoulder. With all their high heroic valour it was impossible that a conflict so unequal could be maintained. Amid their grey-coated ranks the brilliant full uniforms and white shoulder-belts of our officers rendered them fatal marks for the Russian riflemen, who, as they pressed onward, believing that all would soon be over with the "Island curs," were everywhere seen bayoneting or braining the wounded.

The Duke of Cambridge was once completely surrounded, and would have been captured but for a few of the 7th Hussars, and by eleven in the forenoon the enemy were close to the tents of the 2nd Division!

Long ere this came to pass, Julian and two or three others of his regiment, in the headlong confusion of a bayonet charge, lost themselves among the brushwood, and speedily found that they were in the Russian rear! To advance was only to court death, as they were certain to be shot down, and not taken prisoners. Ere they could consult for a moment, there was an explosion of musketry, about forty yards distant. His comrades fell dead, and Julian found himself alone to face with a Russian mounted officer and four soldiers of the Jakoutsk Regiment, who were going through the bushes and deliberately assassinating the wounded.

As Julian saw that only one of these men had his musket loaded—his right thumb being on the lock of his piece—he shot him dead just as he was about to kill an officer of the Guards, who was resting helplessly in a sitting position against a heap of stones.

On this the other three uttered a shout of fury, and came on with their bayonets fixed. Julian thought it was all over with him now, but it was not so. With an invocation of Heaven on his lips he hurled with all his

strength his musket at the nearest one, so that the bayonet lodged fairly in his breast. At the other two he fired a revolver that had been lying near, and wounded both severely—one in the arm, and the other in the shoulder.

The officer, who was about thirty paces off, drew a pistol from his holster, and, taking a deliberate aim, fired at Julian, who felt himself struck in the breast, and reeled, believing himself shot.

“God save me!” he exclaimed, and put his hand to the place, but no blood was upon it. He believed the ball had penetrated, and fury, with the dread of death, gathered together in his soul. Then the officer, putting spurs to his horse, was about to cut him down, till he saw the revolver levelled at himself, on which he wheeled about and galloped into the mist, but not before Julian had again recognised in him the spy, Mouravieff!

Breathless, excited, and feeling a kind of sickness at the heart, as the result of this sudden and unequal combat, nathless the innate fighting spirit of his Border race which blazed up within him, he was about to turn away with the intention of seeking the British

lines, whatever the risk might be, for the roar and smoke of the battle (which was strictly confined to the Valley of Inkermann and the fatal redoubt so often taken and retaken) had now passed towards our camp, on which the foe was already too close ; but ere he quitted the spot, the officer whom he had protected called to him by name, and on approaching he discovered the sufferer to be Sir Harry Drake, who had been struck almost senseless by a spent ball, which had hit him on the back part of the head, where the thickness of his bearskin cap had saved him from further injury.

But he was incapable of defending himself, and seemed stunned and literally dazed. Julian raised him up, and the officer clung breathlessly to his arm. Then the former perceiving a kind of hole, cavern, or fissure, he knew not which, opening in a projecting rock close by, he supported, or conducted, him into it, and in doing so he had to pass the Russian whom he had bayoneted, and who was just expiring amid a pool of his own blood, blowing balls of it and foam upward from his lips, and though such a horrid sight might have filled Julian with just horror and pity at

another time, the field at Inkermann was not exactly the place for such sentiments, especially in one who imagined that he had just received a dangerous wound and might be bleeding internally.

For a moment, at that idea, a cold sweat came over him, with the strange sensation that all this must be happening, *not* to him, but to some one else; and with it was a momentary dread fear in his heart, and a bounding of all his pulses.

On examination, he found, however, to his joy, that though his clothing had been pierced, the ball had gone no further. The pocket-book, which he carried in the breast of his uniform, had saved him from what might certainly have been a mortal wound.

"Stay with me, like a good fellow," said Sir Harry, in a low, faint voice, "and in a little time we can rejoin the brigade together—alone, I shall never reach it."

"I shall not leave you, sir," said Julian, as he handed his water-bottle to Sir Harry; "in fact, it would seem that our only safety consists in remaining where we are, and out of sight of all stragglers."

"Those butcherly dogs have been showing no quarter to-day, and but for your opportune arrival I must have perished at their hands, as so many helpless creatures have done, in that truly infernal redoubt. As I lay helpless yonder, it seemed something miraculous the way in which you polished off those four Russians and put the fifth scoundrel to flight."

"But for this revolver, sir, there would have been another story to tell."

"You and I should not have been here to tell it," said Sir Harry. "I shall never forget you, never, for I and mine owe you a debt of everlasting gratitude," he added, grasping the hand of Julian; "but for the life of me—the life you have saved—I know not in what way to reward you."

"Hush," said Julian; "I hear voices and other sounds."

The latter proved to be the rumble of ill-greased wheels and the clatter of artillery, spongers, and rammers, as four Russian pieces of heavy cannon, painted in that pea-green colour which the capture of so many of them rendered familiar to our troops in the Crimea, came furiously through the dense brushwood,

with their foam-flecked horses at a gallop, and were wheeled round and unlimbered, with their muzzles pointed to what was *then* the Russian rear, while the escort halted and proceeded to reload their carbines and pistols.

"I fear we have lost the day," said Sir Harry, in a low voice, though the roar of battle in the valley was deepening again.

"It does not look like it, if they are beginning to retire their guns, as this movement would seem to import."

CHAPTER III.

THE CAVERN.

AGAIN and again Sir Harry Drake repeated his thanks to Julian, and expressed gratitude for the timely succour he gave; and the latter could but urge that he had done no more than his duty, and that he was certain Sir Harry would have done as much for him. Yet, while lurking there, he could not help contrasting the actual value, and the probable future, of the two lives that had been so nearly hanging in the balance.

Young, wealthy, and titled, Sir Harry had so much to make life valuable. Julian was young, too; but his life was one of obscurity now, and even hope seemed to have gone out of it; while the fierce excitement of the present seemed an opiate, a species of artificial panacea for the past. "Every man who has suffered keenly in life," says a writer, "must have felt that there is in the human organisa-

tion an instinctive re-action and resistance against sorrow—a natural tendency to take advantage of any lull in the storm, and a disposition to deceive ourselves into the belief that we are forgetting for the time that which every effort proves we too bitterly remember.”

It added to the gratitude of Sir Harry the knowledge that, but for Julian’s gallant heart and ready hand, the farewell letter and packet which had been left in his tent would, by the next mail from Balaclava, have been speeding to *her* to whom they were addressed.

The place in which he had found shelter, or concealment, was one of the many caverns and cells cut out of the solid rock by the Greek monks in past ages, and for which the valley of Inkermann has frequently been named the City of Caverns. Many of these are connected with each other by stairs and galleries, and in many of them have been found stone sarcophagi.

In long perspective, beyond the entrance of the one in which Julian and Sir Harry were lurking, could be seen now, as the morning sun exhaled the silvery mist, the picturesque and beautiful valley through which

the Tchernaya, after being spanned by a picturesque old bridge, winds amid the most luxuriant verdure, and between high white cliffs that are literally honeycombed by cells and caverns, till it falls into the harbour of Sebastopol.

But to look forth was full of peril, for the Russian gunners were prowling among their own wounded and the British dead searching for plunder. They frequently came close to the cavern's mouth, and had any of them conceived the idea of searching there, the lurkers would have been lost, though Julian had now another musket, to replace the one he had hurled, with its fixed bayonet, at the Russian; and thrice he cocked it, and placed himself resolutely before Sir Harry, resolved to sell the lives of both as dearly as possible if the Muscovites approached their hiding-place.

They wore a kind of Tartar cap of black fur; their coarse green uniforms were covered with equally coarse yellow braid; their small, sharp, cunning eyes, their snub noses, and scrubby beards gave them a general aspect of cruelty and low-class brutality; but being

fresh from their barracks in Sebastopol, they had not the wretched and tattered appearance of the Allied troops.

Like the rest of his brother officers, Sir Harry, even in his full uniform, would have cut a strange figure at St. James's or Buckingham Palace. The fringe of his bullion epaulettes was now torn to pieces, and little more than the shoulder-plate and crescent of each remained; his shoulder-belt had long been destitute of pipe-clay; his once scarlet coat was purple and covered with stains; his bearskin had become a rusty brown colour, and his crimson sash, which was then worn in the hideous German fashion, round the waist, was frayed to tatters, and his hands were gloveless.

"Then it would seem that yonder scoundrel's pistol-shot has not injured you, Melville?" said Sir Harry, in a low voice; "when you reeled back, by Jove, I thought he had done for you!"

"My pocket-book saved me, Sir Harry—it bears the mark of the bullet," replied Julian, showing a distinct indentation on the leather case.

"Ah—the—the—with the handkerchief," said Sir Harry, his eyebrows slightly elevated.

"Yes," replied Julian, curtly, as he replaced it in his breast-pocket.

"Do you always carry that thing about with you?"

"Yes, Sir Harry."

"Why, pray?"

"Simply because I have no other place for it."

Sir Harry actually felt—like the prick of a pin—a sensation of something that if not quite jealousy (how could *he* be jealous of a private soldier?) was very nearly allied to it.

He eyed Julian closely for a time, and then said:

"You certainly are not what you seem."

"I hope I am, at least, a soldier, sir," said Julian.

"Every inch, old fellow!" replied the young baronet emphatically; "but I mean—excuse me—that you must have seen better days."

"We all have, Sir Harry; even you would seem out of place in Regent Street or Pall Mall now."

"In these togs—by Jove, I should think so; but—but you know what I mean," con-

tinned Sir Harry, anxious, now that they were on a subject to which they could not recur again, to elicit some light on the subject of that mysterious handkerchief; "by education and bearing you were evidently meant for another sphere."

"I thank you for thinking so, Sir Harry; but I am now in the sphere which fate has assigned me," replied Julian, with an unmistakable inflection of melancholy in his voice, which at all times was a pleasantly modulated one. "I often get low and out of heart—down a peg or so, like a fool perhaps; but I suppose every man in this world has some little history of his own."

"And yours, my good fellow?"

"Is a sad one—thus, Sir Harry, I would rather not be questioned about it."

This was said very quietly, but with an unmistakable hauteur of tone that made Sir Harry drop the subject, and a sudden commotion among the Russian artillery close by the cavern now gave him something else to think about.

A hoarse word of command was issued; the guns were speedily limbered up, the

horses traced, and with whip and spur, and making the while a tremendous clatter, with all their spongers, rammers, buckets, chains, and spare wheels, the guns of the flying battery, for such it was, departed at a rasping pace towards Sebastopol, crushing down alike the dead or dying that lay in its route, while the roar of the battle came every moment nearer and nearer.

As the wheels went over the dead, Julian more than once saw the latter, by some contortion of the muscles, start horribly into a sitting posture, and then fall prostrate again.

The reason of the increasing musketry fire was this.

When the camp of the 2nd Division was menaced by the presence of the Russians, General Canrobert, with three regiments of Zouaves, five of the infantry of the Line, and a heavy force of artillery, made a furious attack upon their flanks, and from that moment the issue of the battle became no longer dubious, and welcome to the ears of our exhausted and toil-worn soldiers was the sharp sound of the French drums beating the *pas de charge*, and of the Zouave trumpets, as

these active and hardy little fellows, with their swinging kind of quick march, and reckless and brigand-like bearing, advanced into action and drove all before them.

The same strange wail that was heard at the Alma when the Russians gave way now woke the echoes of the Valley of Inkermann, when their sombre battalions wavered, broke, and fled in headlong route towards a range of hills that overlooked the city, hotly pursued by the mingled troops of the Allies ; and by three o'clock in the afternoon the victory was complete.

The loss of life was terrible : of the Allies there were 4,338 killed and wounded, and of the Russians about 15,000 ; and as the area of the field was very limited, being confined to the Inkermann Valley and the little redoubt, the scenes on every hand far exceeded the horror of battles in general, by the display of human passions and human anguish, fury, and hate.

All around, God's fair earth was almost hidden by the bodies of maimed and mangled men, either stark and pale in death, or writhing, shrinking, and slowly moaning under

wounds of every description. Many—too many—of our dead were found, when cold and stiff, with hands uplifted, and horror and entreaty too plainly depicted in their pallid faces, showing that they had been bayoneted in cold blood, and had perished in the act of futile supplication.

Among those so found was poor Bertie Slingsby, of the Guards. In that carnage there also perished Julian's French friend, the young Zouave, who had rushed into action with his green and unhealed wound, and was never seen again; so how he fell, or by what manner of death, none knew. But the Crimea, like the Peninsula, Egypt, and many other lands where our people have fought and conquered, was a place for brief regrets.

As Julian, with his companion (who was still faint and ill with the effect of the half-spent bullet) leaning on his arm, picked a way towards the camp, the sickly sun of the chill November afternoon shone upon a scene that now, when all fierce excitement had passed out of their hearts, was calculated only to draw forth their emotions of pity and horror; for there lay Guardsmen, Linesmen of many regi-

ments, Zouaves, and Russian infantry and riflemen, in every conceivable position, many with blackened, distorted, and bloody faces, and some wearing, in death, a species of ghastly grin ; some seated half upright among the gorse bushes (where the scared birds were twittering), their jaws fallen, and open eyes fixed with a stony glare.

For days the burial parties were engaged in the task of interring the slain, and the fullest military honours were paid to the remains of Sir George Cathcart and other generals who had fallen. In one grave were laid side by side—a sad sight indeed—eleven officers of the Household Brigade, all of them young men, who had displayed the most heroic courage.

By the vast hecatombs in which the dead were thrown, ever and anon the working parties paused, shovel in hand, while the chaplains proceeded with the solemn burial service—"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord," till these beautiful words seemed to lose all effect, from their very reiteration.

"This brilliant but terrible victory sent to

the already overcrowded hospital at Scutari a frightful addition of wounded and dying men. Borne in the arms of their comrades from the field of battle, jolted in rude conveyances over the hills to Balaclava, they were embarked in small and filthy transports, to be tossed on the waves of the Euxine. In the passage across it, many perished amid the terrible deficiency of medical assistance, and even of medicine and dressing; each ship was veritably a chaos of dying men, ghastly wounds, filth, cholera, and fever!"

* * * * *

Ere Julian could leave Sir Harry Drake, and report himself as safe and sound at the headquarters of his battalion, he had to assist him as far as his hut, and, as they passed on towards it, they saw old Colonel Kingsmuir, riding at a hand gallop, but still bareheaded, towards Lord Raglan's quarters.

"Well, thank Heaven that fine old fellow has escaped the carnage of to-day," said Sir Harry; "and few of us, I believe, will forget Guy Fawkes's day at Inkermann! To talk of rewarding you, my friend, would, I know, be a bootless task," he added politely

and gratefully to Julian, "but ere you go, you shall have a glass of wine with me."

"Thanks, Sir Harry—the work of the last few hours has given me a thirst indeed!"

"Men don't perform such services for each other every day as you this day have done for me."

Here his eye fell on his cousin Bertie's unclosed letter. He had heard of his death, but not as yet the barbarous mode of it; and he trembled and bit his lips as he glanced at the dead man's hurried writing:—

"Just going into action; if I am spared, be thankful and rejoice, dearest mother; if not, thank God that I died a glorious death, and shall meet you hereafter. My love to everybody at home—good-bye—God bless you all. Kiss" (here was a girl's name, written tremulously) "for me, and believe me ever, my dearest, dearest mother, your affectionate and loving son."

"Poor Bertie! poor joyous, boyish Bertie!" said Sir Harry, as he covered his face with his hands; "for him the veil is lifted now—he has learned the great secret of Time and Eternity!" and overcome by the events of

that terrible day he fairly wept, and Julian, as he quietly withdrew, certainly did not think the less of his courage and greatness of heart for the manly tears he shed.

CHAPTER IV.

IVAN MOURAVIEFF.

IN the history of the Crimean War, we are told that, at Inkermann, "among the prisoners who fell into our hands was a Russian major, who, more than once, had been heard ordering his men to murder the wounded."

That major belonged to the Jakoutsk battalion, the corps of Ivan Mouravieff, and he was captured by Colonel Kingsmuir and a few men of the 20th; and it was concerning him, and the guilty act in which he had been discovered, that the Colonel had been proceeding to Lord Raglan's cottage when last seen by Julian.

Two days after the battle, when the latter and two of his Guards comrades, who were detailed for future trench duty, were amusing themselves by making some of the stray soda-water bottles, picked up in the vicinity of the officers' tents, into mimic shells or impromptu hand-

grenades, by filling them with powder, bits of iron and bullets, with a fuse run through the tightly wedged cork, an orderly came with a message requiring his attendance at Colonel Kingsmuir's hut; and in great doubt of what that officer wanted with him, and fearing his secret had been discovered, he proceeded to that part of the camp apportioned to the head-quarter staff, and found the Colonel seated alone in the tent which formed the outer half of his abode.

"You are aware, Melville—that is your name, is it not?—of these stories with which the camp is resounding, concerning the murder of our wounded," said the Colonel, "and you, I understand, have actually seen this barbarity committed more than once?"

"I have, sir."

"Sir Harry Drake has told me of the great service you rendered him the other day, and your gallant conflict with five Russians—actually five!—but a man of the 49th did something of the same kind near the two-gun battery. Such bravery deserves some high recognition, and would obtain it in any other service than ours," added the Colonel, for the

Victoria Cross had not as yet been instituted. "When last here, you said that you could recognise the officer you had seen assassinating the wounded in the sortie of the 26th of October?"

"Without a doubt. I saw the same man again at Inkermann, and saved Sir Harry from his butcherly hands. I should know him among a thousand by the great scar on his cheek."

"Good! Then I shall require your services. On these matters I am to proceed towards Sebastopol with a flag of truce. The man we suspect of having been the spy, and who gave the enemy a notion of the angles of our zigzags, has a high command—or is supposed to have such—in that quarter of the city near the battery of the Naval Brigade. There is just a chance that you may recognise him, if he escaped Inkermann, and you shall accompany me."

"I thank you, sir, for the honour."

"This murder of wounded men is an atrocity that has no parallel in modern war. It is frightful!"

"Not when judged from a Russian point of view, sir," said Julian. "Do not Segur and

Fazensac tell us of equally terrible things in their campaigns ? ”

“ Ah—you have read Count Segur and Fazensac ? ” said the Colonel, with a tone of surprise, and Julian coloured when finding that he was forgetting his *rôle*. “ Surely, a young man of your education should be elsewhere than in the ranks. I must look to this.”

“ I thank you, sir, and shall wait outside your tent,” replied Julian, as he withdrew.

To any other private soldier all this would have proved both flattering and encouraging ; but Julian shrank from all such patronage, as calculated to excite envy and comment among those who were his comrades, and to deprive him of the mask he chose to wear, and to die under, if Fate willed it should be so. No emotions of satisfaction, pride, or hope swelled up in his heart as yet ; he was simply dogged, defiant, indifferent to the past as to the future.

The worthy Colonel could not understand why Julian shrank from him and his friendly encouragement, and deemed him either soured by misfortune or eccentric by nature ; but he was able to perceive that there was some strange mystery about the young man.

Could the Colonel have seen through it all! Kate, his daughter, was once the early love of Julian—and loved passionately, too; *now* she was Julian's step-mother, and he laughed at the situation; he had come to that mood at last. Yet he had a profound regard for the brave Colonel, whose voice and face brought back so vividly the home of his boyhood, whose grey hair of a few years ago was white now as the down of the thistle, and who had ever been the kind friend of his old grandsire, the veteran Captain, of Fairy Knowe; and he felt that he could follow him to death, and give a life to save his.

A few minutes afterwards saw them proceeding direct towards Sebastopol. The Colonel was on foot, with a despatch from Lord Raglan addressed to Alexander, Prince Menschikoff, on the subject of the recent atrocities; but it was feared that little would be achieved by it or would accrue from it, as that General—though he joined a natural bluntness of manner to a very active intellect—had in his nature much of that foul barbarism which is so often found to be singularly associated with culture,

politeness, and manners in the mind of the Russians.

Julian had a large white handkerchief attached like a banneret to the shaft of a Cossack lance, and followed the Colonel, accompanied by a drummer of the Cold-streams. Heavy firing was at that moment going on along the whole of the French attack, and in some parts of our own, but it ceased when word was carried along the lines that a flag of truce was going into the city.

Proceeding due north, they passed the very place where the spy had spoken to Julian on his post, and on this occasion he found himself for the first time among the works of the sailors' battery, under the gallant Peel, where they had about two hundred ship-guns and mortars, of the heaviest calibre, which they were wont, when bombarding, to fire in salvos, like broadsides, every three minutes, sometimes for eight consecutive hours, causing a roar and concussion that shook both earth and air.

Away in rear of their works were their tents, inscribed, according to their ships, as belonging to the "*Trafalgar's* Lambs," or the

"*Bellerophon's Doves*," and so forth ; and the ease with which these active, lissom, hairy, jovial and muscular fellows, with their splendid development of bone, chest, and arm, trundled about great guns, twelve feet long, and weighing in many instances 113 cwt., and singing and laughing the while, astonished the most sturdy of our artillerymen.

Leaving behind the trenches, where our soldiers were working with John Bull's cheap shovels, which had been sent home as useless by Wellington from Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo, but kept carefully in store ever since, the flag of truce was taken by its bearers, in perfect security, towards the city, over ground that was literally paved with shot and fragments of exploded shells ; and high and strong, massive and grim, before them rose those famous fortifications which the allies had permitted the famous Francis Edward Todleben to raise around a once open city, and thus enable it to resist all their most gigantic efforts for more than a year of suffering and carnage.

Once or twice, from eminences, they had glimpses of the far extent of that noble har-

bour, where so many ships lay sunk, and of the long bridge of boats that lay within the inner basin between the frowning batteries of St. Nicholas and St. Michael.

On drawing near a gate of the city, the Russians, with their flat glazed caps and grey *capotes*, were seen clustered in groups at the embrasures, watching the approach of Colonel Kingsmuir, who waved the despatch he held, while the drummer beat a *chamade* on his drum. The wicket or klinket in the vast gate was then seen to uncloze, and two Russian officers approached to anticipate any closer advance of the flag of truce to their works, being well aware, by their own use and wont, that communications of this nature are frequently designed for the mere purpose of gaining intelligence and of reconnoitring batteries and outposts.

The Russians were tall and powerful men, but meanly featured, and closely shaven all save their thick mustachios. Their loose grey *capotes* were open, and thus revealed their dark green uniforms laced with silver, and adorned with several medals and military orders, among which was the order of St.

George, one only given for brilliant deeds. They had long swords and large military boots, with massive spurs; and in one, by his face, his crooked moustache, and black, beady, almond-shaped eyes, and more than all, by his singularly livid scar, Julian, as he felt his heart bound, recognised Ivan Mouravieff again, the Colonel of the Jakoutsk Regiment, a somewhat savage battalion, raised in Asiatic Russia, among a people of Tartar origin and habits—Ivan Mouravieff, whom the reader must not confound with the famous General of the same name, Nicolas Mouravieff, whom Sir W. F. Williams repulsed before Kars, and who died in September, 1866.

Thrice had Julian now seen this man, so it was impossible that he could be mistaken. The Russian never thought of looking at a mere private soldier, who, as in duty bound stood some paces behind the Colonel, and thus Julian could closely study his face and actions unobserved.

The other proved, eventually, to be the gallant old Kokonovitch, who afterwards, unfortunately for himself, commanded in the fortress of Kinbourn.

"May I inquire the object of this flag of truce?" asked Mouravieff (who, as we have said, was an able linguist) in excellent English, while politely responding to the salute of Colonel Kingsmuir, who was somewhat relieved to find that he would not be compelled as he had feared, to "air" his French.

"The object is, sir, to deliver this despatch, addressed to Alexander, Prince Menschikoff, commanding in Sebastopol, concerning the inhuman slaughter of our wounded by your troops on more than one occasion, but more particularly in the late battle of Inkermann. One of these assassins, a major, is now in our hands, and will no doubt be dealt with according to the laws of war. Another, known well to be Colonel Mouravieff, and whose name may be familiar to you, I hope we shall capture in time."

This was all said with perfect coolness and candour by the Colonel, who was quite unconscious of whom he was addressing. Mouravieff, who had a cigar between his lips (the men of Jakoutsck are known to be the most assiduous smokers in the world), flicked the

ashes of it with a finger on which a large diamond ring was flashing, and eyeing the Colonel firmly, but curiously, said :

“There is more than one Mouravieff in the Russian army.”

“I do not believe there is another such scoundrel as he of whom we have sufficient details.”

The Russian now grew pale with suppressed fury.

“I did not come to discuss his character or his crimes,” said the Colonel, loftily ; “but simply as an officer of Lord Raglan’s staff, to deliver this despatch.”

“Thanks,” said the other, taking the sealed document ; “and what do you propose to do with the Major ?”

“Try him and hang him, as we shall do Mouravieff the spy, and every Russian we find in future violating the laws of war.”

“Enough of this, sir,” exclaimed the Russian furiously ; “you may fall back upon your lines.”

While he and his brother officer, who seemed to expect some explanation of what was passing, conferred for a moment together, Julian said, in a low and agitated voice, as

he began to fear the flag of truce might be violated:

"Colonel Kingsmuir, be wary, sir; the man with the scar is Mouravieff, the spy, the assassin, I spoke of."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Kingsmuir, as his face purpled with indignation, and a little confusion too; "are you sure of this?"

"Sure as that I now live and speak to you."

"So, sir," said Colonel Kingsmuir fearlessly, and half turning away in contempt and disgust, "*you* are the Mouravieff to whom I have been unconsciously referring."

Sombre passion appeared in the face of the Russian, while his beady eyes gleamed, and the gash on his cheek became almost black.

"Dare you make these accusations to my very beard?" he exclaimed.

"I do, sir," responded the Colonel, stoutly and fearlessly.

"On what authority?"

"That of a man whose personal description of you strictly accords with your appearance."

"And who and what is he, pray?" asked the other scornfully.

"A soldier of our Guards."

"A soldier—a peasant—a lying serf, no doubt."

"Neither peasant nor serf, Colonel Mouravieff," said Julian, proudly and undauntedly, remembering, or rather forgetting himself; "but one who in birth and blood is a better and truer man than you!"

Mouravieff, all unaccustomed to be accosted in such a tone, looked sharply at the speaker, and appeared to recognise him.

"This man we shall detain," said he.

"Detain?" repeated Colonel Kingsmuir; "dare you fail in respect to a flag of truce?"

"If the bearers of flags of truce violate truth and propriety, why not?"

If seized and taken into Sebastopol, Colonel Kingsmuir knew that some obscure and terrible fate would be the doom of Julian. He said firmly:

"He goes back to the British lines with me, or I too shall remain a prisoner."

"Take care what you say, sir," replied Mouravieff with a mocking smile, "you know not all that being a Russian prisoner may involve."

"In my case it may involve a general assault

of Sebastopol. But this interview has been protracted long enough."

Colonel Kingsmuir then turned on his heel, and preceded by his flag-bearer and drum-boy, keeping his own person between them and the Russians, he stepped haughtily off in the direction of the sailors' battery, and certainly he did feel they were all the safer when they drew near it.

Mouravieff in fact cared very little about being reported to Prince Menschikoff for the misdeeds laid to his charge, but he felt intense scorn and rage that the chief evidence of such reports should be merely a private soldier, whom in rank and condition he, as a Russian, deemed no better than an ignorant peasant, or slave-born serf; and the parting glance he gave Julian augured little good for him if *he* ever fell into his hands in any fashion.

Whether by chance or design it could not, of course, be known, but just as the trio drew close to the sailors' battery, a round shot, fired from the gate they had left, ploughed up the ground with such force that Julian reeled and fell, and his bearskin tumbled off.

"A kind farewell, and proof of Russian

honour, while our white flag is still flying ! ” said Colonel Kingsmuir, as he assisted Julian to rise ; “ you are not hurt, my lad, I hope ? ”

“ No sir, thanks—but we have had a narrow escape,” he added, shaking the dust from his grenadier cap, and as he did so the face of Colonel Kingsmuir changed in expression from anxiety to extreme surprise.

“ *You,*” said he, as they entered the sheltered pathway in the works, “ you are the young man who protected me with his bayonet, and remounted me, on that night when the trenches were scoured ! I now recognise you, for on that night you lost your cap.”

“ True, sir ; a ball knocked it off.”

“ Then, like Sir Harry Drake, to you I owe my life ! ”

“ If you are pleased to say so, sir.”

“ Why did you never claim the reward I offered ? ”

“ I did but my duty ; and it would ill have become me to accept the guineas, even to spend them among my comrades.”

“ You shall have a noble reward for all this, if it is in the power of me to obtain it for you,” said the Colonel emphatically. “ Stay,” he

suddenly added, as Julian was about to resume his cap ; "your name is Melville—Julian Melville ?"

"Yes, Colonel," replied the other, into whose weather-beaten and faded young face the blood rushed hotly.

"I have been blind in not recognising you before ! My poor lad, how came all this about ?"

Julian looked down sadly ; the time he had dreaded and done his best to avoid had come inexorably to pass, and he shrank instinctively from speaking of himself, and laying bare his miserable story, of the greater features in which the Colonel had not the most remote conception ; and Julian felt keenly and bitterly that in it there were secrets, "like those wonderful hopes and dreams that lie down deep within us, and go to make up the concealed life of our dearest feelings, and cannot be spoken of to the world."

"How came you to be soldiering here ?" asked the Colonel, patting him kindly on the shoulder ; "surely this is a sad reverse for you."

"Misfortune left no other course open to me—I could neither dig nor beg. It is through

no error of mine that I stand before you, Colonel, a private soldier to-day."

As Julian spoke, his brow was knitted into two upright lines, that made him the image of his father, Deloraine.

"And the poor old Captain!" said Kingsmuir, as his eyes glistened; "how many a cosy chat about old times, and how many a tough bout at chess, we have had together! Ah, by the way," he added, with a little laugh, "in those days you used to have a boyish fancy for my Kate—got over all that sort of thing, of course."

"Oh, quite, Colonel."

"Dear Kate is a married lady now—quite a little matron."

"I have had much to think of since those days," said Julian, with a dreamy smile and husky voice.

"And your brother, who was always mooning about book in hand—he is well, I hope?"

"I can only hope so, too—for I know not!" said Julian, in a voice now thoroughly broken.

"This state of affairs must be mended," said the Colonel, kindly patting him on the shoulder, "and I must see you again about

them. In making my report to Lord Raglan, I shall not fail to tell him you have done other services than recognise our friend Mouravieff; come to my tent to-morrow, and I will speak with you again."

Julian did so, fruitlessly, as it proved, hoping and wishing he scarcely knew what; because, for long after that day of the recognition, he saw nothing of Colonel Kingsmuir, who, after being suddenly seized with fever, had been conveyed on board of one of the hospital ships at Balaclava, where he had a narrow escape from perishing, on the night of the 13th November, when one of those terrific gales for which the Black Sea has a fatal celebrity caused immense loss to the Allied shipping, and dreadful suffering to the troops.

Tents and huts were alike uprooted, amid a deluge of rain, which converted both camp and trenches into a chaos of mud and water.

There, under "the fierce pelting of the pitiless storm," our brave soldiers passed a night of singular horror—such a night as those at home could form no conception of. They were without shelter, food, or fire; many men perished from cold and exposure, and

more than forty horses were found dead when morning dawned.

Drenched with rain and weary with toil, many lay down amid the half-frozen slush in the trenches and strove to sleep ; but at midnight the roar of a cannonade roused them from their miserable slumbers, and a sortie of Russians, fresh from their barracks, came furiously out, believing that the Allies would be, as they really were, worn out with fatigue.

The little ray of hope—it might be of ambition—Colonel Kingsmuir's last words had kindled in Julian's breast faded away, and the old bitterness came over him. He might find—and as a unit fill—a nameless grave, like the thousands he had seen interred after Alma, like the thousands after Inkermann—poor Achille, the Zouave, among others ; and she, that same Kate who had so loved him once, and the gentle and generous Amy, who he knew had never ceased to love him, would never know his fate ; but what did it matter ?—what had he to live for ?

Most awful were the days and nights of duty in the trenches, where the relays of troops had to shiver for twenty-four hours at a time, too

often amid mud that was knee-deep, and which, as the dreadful Crimean winter drew on, was always frozen in the darker and colder hours before dawn. There they huddled together for warmth, and there, in many instances, they died, side by side, while the red bombs went whistling in fiery arcs overhead.

Fever, cholera, and cold slew as many as the bayonet; nor was hunger wanting amid the horrors of the protracted siege; for at length half-rations, and then only quarter-rations, were issued to the troops, and firewood became so scarce that meat, in many instances, was eaten raw.

"It is useless for gentlemanly tastes, and longings for whitebait; iced champagne, and so forth, to crop up here," said Julian one evening, as he accoutred himself in the dusk. "I'm bound for trench duty," he added to a comrade, "and may not come back again—many go to the front and come back no more. Here is the last shilling I have in the world, Tom; get what you can with it at the sutler's hut—and now, ta-ta, old fellow, good-bye."

"For to-night only, I hope," responded the other, who pocketed the donation, and mut-

tered to himself, "what is up with Melville—he seems in a reckless mood at present, poor fellow; but he is not worse off than the rest of us," he added, as he watched, by the light of a pale young moon that glinted on the distant spires and domes, the dark mass of the relieving column toiling through mud and snow, and disappearing, with the flash of sword and bayonet blade, into the shadows of the night, to begin the twenty-four hours of unspeakable misery in the perilous trenches.

It was only a "day's pay," poor Julian's farewell gift, but hungry Tom thought, as some have it, "that surely such loving and unselfish natures as his shall find their deeds recorded on High, and meet with their reward."

CHAPTER V.

REVELATIONS.

THE scene changes again.

The same pale crescent moon that looked down upon our soldiers shivering and dying in the half-frozen trenches of Sebastopol, was shining sweetly and peacefully on the quiet scenery, the smooth turf and trees, of Hyde Park, and on that curiously varied line of fashionable mansions named Park Lane, where every style of architecture—and too often no style at all—stands side by side.

The Deloraines were still in town, though the season was winter. The Earl had been, as he phrased it, “in a bad way for some time past,” and in the doctor’s hands. The fast pace he had gone for years was telling upon him now, and making him prematurely old—to his own horror, even grey!

For the first time in his life he found himself compelled to relinquish his fox-hunting.

A yacht voyage to the Mediterranean had been recommended by the medical faculty, when the season opened, and Kate had actually schemed out that, beyond Malta and the Ionian Isles, they might, like some other yachting folks, venture into the waters that washed the now sadly historical city of Sebastopol.

Dwelling in the lap of luxury and peace, little could she conceive the scenes that were hourly being enacted there, nor could she contrast them, even in imagination, with her own surroundings, as she sat in her stately inner drawing-room, with its beautifully-papered walls and panelings of white and gold, its velvet carpet of the most delicate tints, its silk curtain, of the softest rose colour, its *jardinières* and objects of *vertu*, among which, on a *gueridon* table, was a beautiful miniature fountain of Bohemian glass spouting a pleasant perfume.

At her davenport of rosewood, inlaid with engraved and lovely mother-of-pearl, she was now writing "to mamma at Malta," concerning the projected voyage "in Julian's charming yacht," in which they hoped to bring her

and the Colonel home together, for, surely, the latter had seen enough of fighting and sickness now." Amy Kerr was with her as usual; Kate was never like most young married ladies, who avoid third parties as visitors, for she usually had quite a circle about her; and now Amy's pretty fingers were knitting most industriously, as if her food depended upon her exertions, some complicated thing in Berlin wool—as all the girls in Britain were doing then—for our soldiers and sailors before Sebastopol, when she could with ease have bought a ton weight of such matters in Oxford Street; but, then, did not a little Scottish school-girl send a pair of warm cuffs to old Sir Colin Campbell, who wore them when he led the thin red Highland line at Balaclava?

For weeks they had heard nothing of Colonel Kingsmuir, save that he had left the camp ill; but whether he was at Scutari or Malta they knew not, for the electric cable, which was then being passed from the Crimea, under the Black sea, to Bulgaria, and from thence to Britain, was not complete, and the mails were far from certain.

Dinner was just over, a luxurious one, from

the oysters to the coffee and maraschino ; and, as one at the Star and Garter on the previous day had not improved his lordship's system, the Earl was rather "down a peg;" yet he was fondly, or, perhaps, rather admiringly, regarding the elegant figure and graceful head of Kate as she bent over her desk.

"Ah," he was thinking, "we Deloraines have always been famous for wedding beautiful women, and it is a good tradition to keep up in a family—especially one so old as ours."

And Kate, quite conscious that he *was* admiring her, played at times coquettishly with her wedding-ring, unconscious, apparently, that it was the ring of the lost Julian's mother. At this time a liveried servant glided to the Earl's elbow, with a card on a salver.

"Mr. Gerard Melville! who the deuce is he?" asked the latter, reading the superscription, half in a dream and half startled by the old, familiar name, and feeling just then disinclined to be troubled with anyone or anything. "Show him into the library, unless he will tell his business."

"He declined to do so, my lord," replied

he of the shoulder-knot, who certainly had tried to worm it out of the visitor, together with half a crown.

“Very well—I’ll see him. It is, doubtless, some begging-letter affair.”

Dinner, we have said, was over, and the hour somewhat late for a stranger especially to present himself, and as this one was very plainly, almost shabbily attired, the acute hall-porter—acute, at least, in such matters as costume—left him in the vestibule, while the card was taken up a stately staircase, rich with green carpeting, and snow-white statues, bearing shaded lamps.

In the subdued light of the cosy library, face to face were the father and his youngest son, and as the former thought of the situation, or what might spring from it, for a moment he felt savage with the world in general, or, as the Scots say, “at large.”

Gerard’s heart was throbbing, as he stood, hat in hand, and bowed, as he would to a stranger; and, sooth to say, he had scarcely seen that “evil Earl” before, but now his face brought back to memory that of Julian. That of Gerard—ever thoughtful, yet good-

humoured, ever full of hope, love, and goodwill to mankind, had a weary look that was strangely blended with triumph and with something of sorrow and hostility, for he had a difficult part to play—something startling to announce—and was somewhat “dashed” by the unusual magnificence of his surroundings.

His fair face—fair, with his soft eyes and crispy, golden-tinted hair, that started from his forehead in sprouts—was one that would seem bright even in death; but it looked strange and earnest to-night.

“May I inquire the object of this visit?” asked the Earl, haughtily, and looking as unconscious as he could, yet something was whispering in his ear, “Be sure your sin shall find you out.”

“If you will permit it, my lord, as it is a family matter, I should like my communication to be made in the presence of Lady Deloraine.”

“Of Lady Deloraine!” exclaimed the Earl, astounded by the calm deliberation of this reply.

“Yes.”

“A lady, Miss Kerr, is with her just now,

and to what end—" the Earl was beginning hotly, when Gerard simply waved his hand and said,

"Then let the lady come, too—my old friend, Amy Kerr, may as well hear to-night what all the world will know to-morrow."

"They are here," said the Earl, haughtily, and feeling somehow that his visitor was not one to be trifled with, for the raised voice of Gerard had brought the two ladies to the open door of the library which adjoined the outer drawing-room.

"Gerard—why it *is* Gerard Melville!" they exclaimed together, welcoming him with both hands in honest warmth of heart, while the Earl's brow became deeply knitted.

"Oh, Gerard," added Amy, "how we admired your novel, and that sad, sweet Salome, your heroine!"

Gerard, at the name, grew pale and utterly confused for a moment; but, turning to the Earl, he said,

"The proofs, the long-lost proofs, of my mother's marriage to one every way unworthy of her have now been found, my lord. I was resolved, if such existed anywhere, to procure

them, and a secret voice within me seemed to be ever urging me on till I did find them, most miraculously, and can now solve the sad story of our mother's wrongs and *your* cruelty to her—to Julian—and to me!"

Kate, at these strange words, grew pale as death, and Amy, fearing that Gerard had lost his senses, was about to rush to the door, which the Earl had carefully closed to preclude any eaves-dropping.

"Moderate your tone, sir," said he, sternly, "and remember that any communication you have to make is for my ear alone."

But it was not so; the young Countess had heard too much not to be anxious to hear more, and as she glanced breathless from the pale face of her husband to the equally pale one of Gerard, she saw that the latter was the possessor of some secret, or power over the former that controlled his usually passionate spirit, and subdued his general haughty bearing; and a great fear, she knew not of what, took possession of her.

"Speak, Gerard—what does all this mean?" she urged piteously.

Modestly, briefly and tremulously, unwilling

to sting her by speaking too severely of her husband—of his own father, he related, with a voice that seemed full of tears, the story of his mother's wrongs, of the secret marriage contracted in her girlish love and folly—a marriage repudiated, ere the honeymoon was well nigh past, under the mal-influence of a foreign adventuress and *intriguante*, the Baroness Sonnenberg; of where he and Julian were born, and how Gladys had died of a broken heart, in ignorance that her wedding was strictly in accordance with Scottish law, and that proofs of it—irrefragable proofs were in existence—and had been placed by himself in the hands of those who knew how to use them—proofs that made his dear brother Julian, if living, the undoubted Lord of Hermitage, and heir to a Scottish Earldom; and poor Kate heard him as if turned to stone, while the Earl did so in equal shame, mortification, and bewilderment, for he was aware that the miserable Uriah Grippie was dead, and had lost the documents long ago.

“And where did you find these so-called papers?” asked the Earl, after a pause, and unwilling to deem himself baffled yet.

"Where he, who failed to sell them to you, placed them."

"How came you to know they were in existence, and where?"

"Ask me not *who* was my informant; but they shall speak for themselves," replied Gerard in a subdued voice, as the bewildering memories of Wiesbaden came over him.

"Speak—tell me all this again," said Kate, with one hand placed on Gerard's shoulder, and another on her heart as if she felt a pain there, while avoiding her husband's face.

Gerard told her that on reaching the town where the country solicitor had lived, and hearing of his death, he had half lost hopes, but while wandering at sunset on the bridge of the Nith, he came suddenly upon one they would both remember in Ettrick, Ringan Jannock, the reckless Border poacher, of whom he knew little that was good and much that was evil; but his home face was a familiar one, and he had so few friends in the world that for a little time Gerard's honest heart actually warmed to the worthless fellow, from whom he learned that though the wicked lawyer was dead, his house, with the date and legend over

its door was still in existence, near the river, as a tavern.

Thither he went, and pretending to be an artist who wished to paint the river scenery, he procured, but not without some difficulty, the very room he wanted—the panelled room of which he had received a description, and which overlooked the vast expanse of the Nith. There among, the old wainscoting of the wall he saw the little knob, like a lion's head, which indicated the secret recess, and with a heart that beat wildly and painfully, the moment he was alone and secure from interruption, he pressed the spring, the panel unclosed, and therein he found carefully docketed in the handwriting of Uriah, and bound with red tape, the whole of the documents proving the marriage of his mother to the then Lord Hermitage, the identity of himself and his brother, and also more than one letter from Deloraine offering a princely sum for their surrender.

In his latter days Uriah Grippie had been much given to walking in his sleep, and this tendency to nocturnal perambulation had cost him his life. We have in a preceding chapter

referred to his dream that the papers were lost, and his terror and bewilderment on finding that they were so.

In his sleep, then—when under the influence of one thought—the security of those papers which might have brought him so much money, he had gone to that place and secreted them; and it is strange that in his sleep the same idea, or recollection, had never occurred to him again.

Gerard had believed implicitly in the letter and the promise of Salome, and in addition to these, had the positive conviction—the expectation that sooner or later all the required proofs would come to light. Whence this confidence rose he knew not; but his success was complete.

How the strange Salome (of whom he could not trust himself to speak), save by some occult power, became possessed of the knowledge of a secret so remote and obscure, was beyond the conception of Gerard, and he could but hope that he might live to learn the key to it all.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EFFECT PRODUCED.

CRUEL and callous as he was by nature—a man upon whom no human trouble made the slightest impression, unless it affected himself personally—to a man of the Earl's fierce pride and haughty spirit, the humiliation of the present hour—one fated to stamp itself on his memory for ever—was, if painful, salutary. His hair was damp with perspiration, and hot shame alternated with livid pallor in his face. Even Gerard felt for him !

Who could have told the latter of the existence of those papers and *where* they were, when even the wretched Grippie knew not, or failed to remember where he had concealed them, even when offered a sum for which, thought the patriotic and parental Earl, the greatest lawyer in Scotland might sell his father's bones ?

“ And where now are the originals of those

so-called documents, young man ? ” he asked, loftily, breaking a silence that had become oppressive to all ; to none more than Kate.

“ In the hands of the most eminent legal firm in Scotland—a firm now in immediate communication with your lordship’s agents concerning them. Surely you do not think I would be foolish enough to carry them about with me, or to bring them *here* ? ”

Deloraine ground his teeth.

“ The duplicate certificate of the marriage, bearing your lordship’s signature, is fully corroborated by the documents that accompany it, and its date corresponds with that which was engraved on the wedding-ring of my mother.”

Kate drew off the fated ring and looking at the inner side, saw, what she had never seen before, the date engraved—for the hoop had never left her finger since the Earl had placed it there : and she had been married with a dead woman’s marriage-ring : an ominous feature, as every crone at Kingsmuir knew. Its first wearer had not been a widow ; but she had been the mother of Julian—her husband’s son. Oh, what an odious coil all this was !

All Julian's apparently wild and enigmatical language with reference to the Earl, when he lay on a bed of suffering, was fully explained now, and it came back to her memory with every significance. She felt a despairing species of chill steal over her, and strove to conceal the emotion from the Earl. Whatever he had done in time past, however barbarously he had used poor Julian and his brother, she was now his wife ; she must do her duty as such, she felt, and to obey and still love him, if she could, were a part of it.

Poor Julian ! she now saw and felt what she never felt nor saw before, how *his* secret knowledge of the situation must, in his young heart, have added to the bitterness of her desertion of him.

"And you decline to say how you came to have a knowledge of these documents ?" asked the Earl for the third or fourth time.

"Rather let me say that I cannot," replied Gerard. And as he spoke, his face and eyes seemed to assume the expression (as they had the likeness) of those of Gladys, as the Earl had last seen them, full of intense upbraiding, on the day he left her at Wiesbaden. In all

this affair there was a mystery that impressed him, and added to his perplexity ; for instinctively Gerard shrank nervously from all reference to Salome.

"Oh, Deloraine !" exclaimed the Countess Kate, in a tone of anguish, while entwining her soft and lingering fingers within his, and suddenly and sharply withdrawing them when he attempted to return their pressure.

The Earl was conscious of the unusual action ; also that she did not call him "Julian," and bad though he was, he felt a pang !

"And to obtain or destroy these holograph documents you actually offered a great sum to this man who is now dead," she said, while weeping.

"I was never a saint, my dear girl, and could never live as a hermit."

"But, but—" her voice was choked in tears ; her cheeks were crimsoned with shame, and she dared not even look at those who pitied her, Gerard and Amy Kerr.

"Kate," said the Earl in a tone of remonstrance, as he bent over the chair into which she had flung herself, "this affair was the one

great mistake of my life, and I have been run to earth at last.

"The one?"

"Never can I make such another," was the evasive reply.

"I should think not, my lord!"

When they were alone he was always "Julian," he noticed, and felt the difference again.

"It was the best thing that could have happened to me—that quarrel—that separation in Germany," he whispered in her ear; "it gave me you, my own sweet Kate."

She only shivered under his touch and wept, while her memory went upbraidingly back to that sunny day when in the garden at Kingsmuir, Amy had rallied her on the coming of Deloraine, then Lord Hermitage; and inspired by a little pique or jealousy, had spoken, apparently with mockery and pity, of Julian Melville!

To Kate, pure, good, honourable and high-souled, these revelations and the new and startling light thrown upon her husband's character, and the real story of his past life, proved a grievous shock indeed!

"Oh, Heavens!" she thought, "can the man to whom my parents gave me for a title be capable of baseness so great?"

"My Lord Deloraine—father!" exclaimed Gerard, as his voice grew tremulous with tender emotion, "for you are my father!"

"Well?" said the Earl, sharply.

"Let the dead past bury its dead; receive me as your son!" Then they shook hands for the *first* time; but how cold and nerveless on one side was that shake of the hand!

"And Julian," said Amy, inquiringly, her mind filled with one thought.

"Julian, poor, poor Julian," exclaimed Gerard; "he, the Lord Hermitage, is now serving in that horrible Crimea as a private soldier; or *was* so until lately."

Was—a soldier—a soldier in the Crimea?" exclaimed Kate, in sorrow and bewilderment, while Amy Kerr, trembling in every limb, and faint and pale as death, regarded Gerard with dilated eyes and parted, speechless lips.

"You know not the son you have lost!" said Gerard to his father reproachfully; "you know not him you have cast forth to penury, it may yet be death! But," he added after a pause of

surprise, "you surely saw this morning's paper, my lord?"

He *had* seen the leading journal and knew to what Gerard referred, but had kept silence thereon to his own household, by whom it had been passed over unnoticed, and he now affected to feel some interest in it when Gerard drew forth the paper, and laid it before the ladies, who were astounded by the paragraph.

It was a brief statement among the latest items of war news from the East, that for two acts of special bravery, private Julian Melville, of the Foot Guards, had been gazetted to a commission in the Royal Scots regiment of Fusiliers.

These acts were, protecting Colonel Kingsmuir of the Staff from the bayonets of the Russians, and remounting that officer, who had been unhorsed during a midnight sortie; and also saving the life of Sir Harry Drake of the Coldstreams, at great hazard to himself, and after a most unequal conflict with no less than five of the enemy, who had been assassinating our wounded at Inkermann. In addition, it was said that this reward had been given by Lord Raglan at the special request of the

Colonel, who in this young soldier had discovered the *grandson* of an old brother officer. "The story is known to all," added the war correspondent, in his nervous style, "and our soldiers, fresh from victory and carnage, after that terrible day at Inkermann—the battle of the rank and file—in every hut and tent, spoke only of Melville of the Guards!"

"This proof is enough surely," exclaimed Gerard, with kindling eyes; "there are not likely to be two Melvilles named Julian, and both the friends of Colonel Kingsmuir!"

The Colonel had duly written of all these stirring passages to his family; but the mails had perished in the Black Sea, and thus through the medium of the press did they first become known to those whom they interested most deeply and keenly.

"So our Julian is true to the fighting instincts of his race!" exclaimed Gerard; and even the callous heart of Deloraine caught a little of his enthusiasm; but these new tidings coming so rapidly after the late revelations, filled Kate and Amy with fresh wonder and such great sympathy that some time elapsed

ere they could speak or think of them with coherency, and to do so was somewhat of a relief after the painful story they had heard.

And so he had actually saved the life of her dear, dear father, and raised himself to the rank of a commissioned officer, this poor waif, so wronged, so blighted in youth and manhood — so sneered at by her mother, and so pitilessly cast off by herself! was the first thought of Kate, while both Gerard and Amy shared her genuine joy and satisfaction. He had ever hoped that he, or his brother, might yet do something great or glorious in some way, where, when, or how, he knew not, but something that might make their unnatural father proud to own one if not both of his sons ; and now a double act of great bravery in the field had been done by Julian—by the Lord Hermitage, for as such he should soon be known to all !

He was a soldier still in that land of hourly peril and of unparalleled suffering ; but he no longer ran the risk of perishing obscurely now, unnamed and unknown. He was now an officer in the same regiment to which his grandsire had belonged, the old Captain at

Fairy Knowe—the same regiment in which the old veteran had served under Cornwallis and Abercrombie—his once happy moveable home, round which his fondest traditions, thoughts, and memories hovered, in whatever land it was serving, while life lasted, the old Scottish Fusiliers, whose colours were first unfurled on the field of Bothwell Bridge.

The revelations of that evening made it one never to be forgotten by those who were present, by none more than Amy Kerr, whose sweet, bright face grew brighter with the double joy of hearing of Julian's existence, and of his just and true position.

If she loved Julian before, in the past time, when they were wont to meet at Kingsmuir, and as the poor stricken creature she had last seen in London, much more did she do so now when she learned *who* he was, how wronged and cruelly humiliated; and how nobly, bravely and worthy of his race he had acted at Sebastopol. And how strange it seemed that he should have saved the life of her suitor, Sir Harry Drake, his own rival, though he knew it not.

“But Julian would have done it all the same

—my own dear Julian!" thought the girl in her heart.

And when she spoke of him afterwards to the somewhat crushed and distrait young Countess her eyes became eloquent and beaming with pity and love; while to the animated expression of her certainly beautiful face, and to the play of her features, she added the graceful action of her shapely hands; but Kate seemed to see before her only the grim, abashed face of Deloraine.

Full of bright and happy dreams of the future, waking dreams, Amy lay with her soft cheek smiling on her laced pillow, sleepless, far into the hours of the night, amid surroundings very different from those of him who occupied her thoughts. He, too, was lying on *his* pillow; the billet of wood that was to boil his ration beef next day.

With a promise to Kate that he would return early on the following day, Gerard had gone to his hotel, and the Earl sat long in the library full of thoughts of a very sombre cast. He turned his dark eyes, into which a kind of stealthy expression had come, from the shaded lamp, and remained with his forehead pressed

on his hand, on a finger of which sparkled a diamond, given by the selfish old earl, his father, when he was dying, and in dying, cared for nothing human but his equally selfish son, and then only as the inheritor of his title—Deloraine !

The mask he had worn to many, and more than all to Kate, was removed now, and she was mistress of his cruel secret and strangely barbarous conduct.

“ Sons grown up to manhood, two of them—the devil ! ” thought he as he had often thought before : “ the world puts its nose into everyone’s business, and dearly dotes on scandal ; so the less cause now I give for speculation the better.”

He took in the whole situation, and seeing the futility of resistance, if that duplicate certificate proved what Gerard and the now dead lawyer (on whom he mentally invoked the deepest curses) asserted, he resolved to accept it without the nuisance of a public legal procedure in the Scottish courts.

He knew enough to be aware, that by the law of Scotland marriage is not looked upon as a sacrament, but rather as a civil contract

to which two elements are essential, mutual consent, and some documentary or other mode of indisputably proving that consent. He knew that law and custom preferred the performance of the ceremony by a clergyman of any known faith, but that it admitted of many other methods, as for instance writings, like the contract framed by Uriah Grippie, who was moreover, a justice of the peace; verbal or other pledges given in presence of witnesses, and that to this hour people may contract such an alliance by simply presenting themselves before the nearest sheriff, and publicly accepting each other.

And to this effect did his lawyers very plainly put his situation, when by the post next morning his lordship received a letter from his astounded agent in Edinburgh, that clenched the whole affair in all its legal details, asserting alike the validity of the documents produced, and of the claims so boldly announced by Gerard, and that resistance on his part, even if he thought of it, was vain.

Mentally, his lordship indulged in many evil words, and then muttered,

“Egad, it is as well I threw up the sponge handsomely to that young fellow last night!”

Remorse, compunction, or pity for the sufferings that must have been endured by the poor dead Gladys and the proud old soldier, her father, he had no more now than he had when the wicked Sonnenberg bore him away in triumph at Wiesbaden ; but now, certain new thoughts, on reflection, occurred to him, when through the medium of a goblet of iced champagne, he reviewed the *dénouement* of last night.

Of other heirs to the ancient title of Deloraine, there was no prospect, and he hated with all the animosity of which he was capable, the kinsman to whom, in default of such heirs, his estates must inevitably go.

He saw that Gerard was every inch a courtly gentleman ; and he remembered that the other son he had used so cruelly was even more so in aspect and bearing ; and he knew that by habit, education, and culture, both were well calculated to take their place in the great world, and perhaps to shine there ; when both might have been equally his sons, and totally unrepresentable.

He racked his invention—never a very brilliant one at any time—to conceive in what fashion, the strange story of these newly-found sons should be made public, to that atrocious bugbear known as “Society,” and he actually shivered and ground his teeth as he thought of the clubs, their speculations and laughter.

He gave it up as “a bad job—an infernal bore,” and resolved to leave to his lawyers the mode of framing the paragraph by which it should first be made publicly known, also the suitable allowances to be accorded to them, and the amendments, in future editions of *Burke* and *Debrett*; and meantime, he would put the silver streak between himself and the British Isles, by sending his yacht to the Mediterranean, and joining her at Marseilles.

The Earl was not a good-natured man and never had been, as those who are wont to have little peccadilloes usually are; yet he was anxious to make his crime against Gladys appear as small as possible to Kate and her friend; but for the soul of him, he knew not how to go about it, or how to frame an excuse; thus he had taken refuge in silence and

acquiescence in the undoubted claims so firmly advanced by Gerard, on the part of his absent brother and himself.

In fact he was compelled to eat the most humble of humble pie.

Hence it was that as he had listened over-night to the accumulated evidence of Gerard, a grey look came into his face and a troubled expression into his eyes, that quailed beneath those of his gentle and honest-hearted son.

One feature in the whole affair, alone pleased, while it surprised him, and this was the knowledge that the entire sympathies of Kate were with Julian and Gerard.

Luckily she had no children of her own to excite the least emotion of jealousy or repining, at their being totally supplanted by those of a woman whom she never heard of before ; and, moreover, they were not as strangers to her, for Julian and Gerard had been the friends and playmates of herself and her sisters in childhood.

Gerard, when he left London for the North, had begun to think—notwithstanding his ill-luck—of trying another novel to recruit his

finances; of "putting his shoulder to the wheel" as the saying is, and obtaining a footing on the first step of the ladder that was to lead, perhaps, to fortune; but the documents so prized and so strangely put into his possession, the tidings he had of Julian, and the other work to be done, absorbed every thought; and *now*, the recognition of his place in society rendered such exertion of his talents, unless for his own amusement, unnecessary. Yet to be idle, and careless of the future, save in so far as his brother was concerned, seemed strange to a mind so active as his; and since the advent of Salome he had become a deeper thinker and dreamer than ever.

The darkest hour is always that which precedes the time of dawn; so is it often with the affairs of men, and ere the tide of fortune turns.

Of all these matters Gerard wrote to his brother, telling how measures were in full progress to assert their position and prove their birthright; and that to be for a time out of the way, the Earl was hastening his yacht voyage to the Mediterranean; and his brotherly heart and hand trembled, and his eyes grew moist

with tears of joy, as he addressed the letter to
"The Lord Hermitage."

This he had to enclose in another envelope, as Julian had been gazetted under the name of Melville ; but, indeed, by the current of events, poor Julian was fated to see neither the cover nor its enclosure.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTURE OF KINBOURN.

JULIAN was still fighting the battle of life and death with starvation and the Russians before Sebastopol. In many respects his comforts were few—even less than when he was lost in London, but there were plenty of shot and shell to fill up the intervals of time, and give little space for reflection; and the whole army was in the same condition of rags and wretchedness, a state of matters to which the great loss of transports and stores in the Euxine contributed quite as much as ministerial mismanagement at home.

After the delivery, by Colonel Kingsmuir, of the remonstrance to Prince Gortschakoff from Lord Raglan into the hands of Mouravieff and Kokonovitch, no more authentic cases of the murder of our wounded were heard, save in the instance after the first repulse, at the useless and unwise attack of the Redan.

So the worthy Colonel had not, as we have shown, forgotten Julian's interests and advancement ; neither did Sir Harry Drake, who, when the announcement appeared in the " Gazette," sent him a handsome pair of gold epaulettes, for such badges of rank had not as yet been abolished in the British army ; and the kind baronet did more, for he begged his acceptance of a cheque on the paymaster, " as a brother-officer " to help him with what he might find necessary in his new career as an officer of the Scots Fusiliers, not that there was any difference in the comforts or equipments of any rank in the Crimea now.

Appointed to a commission—a place given to him in society and among gentlemen again ! Could Gerard but know of this, thought Julian, ignorant of all that had so lately been transpiring in the house at Park Lane. Save Gerard, he thought there was no one else at home who had an interest in his fate ; of Kate he never thought at all, save in conjunction with her father ; and times there were when he forgot to think of Amy.

His acts of special bravery, exaggerated perhaps, and some vague stories of his antece-

dents, that soon found their way in true Scottish fashion into the ranks of the Scots Fusiliers, soon made Julian somewhat of a lion in the corps, and his own character and bearing seemed to confirm all these ; while his brother officers were pleased to find that he was now only in his proper place ; that he was noble and distinguished in air, and a gentleman in his bearing—even his tattered uniform could not hide that ; while he had much of grave, sad, manly beauty in his face, overlaid at times with a hard and stern expression. And now for the first time did real ambition and the desire to achieve something great and glorious, replace the dull, desponding indifference of the past, and flame up like a new fire in the heart of Julian.

The close of that year of suffering saw the smart affair known as the “capture of the ovens,” in which our Rifles covered themselves with glory in a struggle with the bayonet, among the ancient caverns and old stone huts used by the Tartar shepherds in more recent and peaceful times ; and in the March of the year following the Emperor Nicholas, the originator of the war, died. But the ghastly

strife still went on in the sea of Azov and along the banks of the Tchernaya ; in the battle of which the French were so kind and tender to the Russian wounded, and so reverently covered with pieces of cloth the upturned faces of all their own dead whom they were unable to inter on the evening of the conflict.

Month succeeded month of peril, slaughter, and death by starvation and disease, as well as by shot and shell ; the Redan was stormed ; Sebastopol was bombarded for the fifth time, set in flames, and abandoned by the bridge of boats on a night when sea and sky seemed alike sheeted with fire, and pillars of dusky smoke appeared to prop heaven as they rose above the doomed city, while the vast multitude of its garrison poured darkly away in silence, by the long bridge of boats, which was instantly cut ; and as that great pontoon, a quarter of a mile in length, swung heavily round, our troops found themselves in deserted and devastated Sebastopol, while the last of the scuttled Russian fleet disappeared in pyramids of flame amid the waters of the inner harbour.

Mighty indeed was the carnage in the four armies ere all this was achieved ; but Julian

had as yet escaped without a wound, and by the casualties of war—promotion went by succession then—found himself well up the list of lieutenants in his corps.

The Crimea was not yet cleared of the Russians, and though our camps and hospitals were full of wounded, no man spoke yet of peace, and none could very precisely see how the war was to end.

The flame of ambition, we have said a few lines back, had now, fortunately for himself, been kindled in the heart of Julian, and he felt that

“Who does i' the wars more than his captain can,
Becomes his captain's captain ; and ambition,
The soldier's virtue, rather makes choice of loss,
Than gain which darkens him.”

By this time, like all the rest, he had become so inured to war and its perils, and so sick of the siege of Sebastopol, that when he found his new regiment was detailed as part of the force destined to storm and destroy Kinbourn, he regarded that expedition as a pleasant little bit of excitement—a change of scene to “fresh woods and pastures new.”

Thus by use and wont, when face to face

with the enemy, though some senses become unusually acute, others are for the time completely deadened ; hence Julian had learned to go about his perilous occupation heedless of what the day might bring forth, though it was sure to bring wounds, agony, and death to many.

Yet, amid the callousness induced by war, human sympathy and feeling at other times come to the surface, and of this he was sensible during the last duty he performed before leaving the camp.

A young subaltern of his regiment had died in his hut after long suffering from a wound, inflicted by one of the last shots fired from Sebastopol. He was a handsome fellow, and beloved by all in the corps, and all of the latter who were able attended his funeral, at which Julian commanded the carrying party—firing there was none. The band, or what remained of it, played the funeral march from his hut to his grave, beside which the pipes sent up their farewell wail.

The coffin, one of plain white deal, was covered by a Union Jack, whereon lay his sword and cap. The burial place was Cath-

cart's Hill (since covered with the tombs of the slain); in full view lay Sebastopol, with dome and spire, bastion and roofless houses, steeped in the amber glory of the sun then setting amid the waters of the Euxine.

Bright purple clouds were crowding over the valley of the Tchernaya. Near the improvised burial-ground were groups of soldiers, who were off duty, and looked quietly at the every-day sight; some cavalry videttes dismounted and stood at their horses' heads; a few civilians from Balaclava uncovered as the impressive scene closed with the last words of the chaplain, just as the sun went down, to flood other scenes and shores with its light; and as Julian's eyes, seeing all through a kind of mist, turned westward, he could not but think, insensibly, of *who* the next might be for whom these sad offices were required, and of the other land or shore, "where there shall be no need of the sun to lighten it; where there shall be no more tears or breaking hearts; where sorrow and trouble shall have passed away."

It was in October, after the fall of Sebastopol, that the Allied generals resolved on the

reduction of the Russian fort at Kinbourn ; and prior to the attempt our Black Sea fleet weighed and stood along the shore, to the great terror of the Tartars, whose pretty and peaceful villages, with vast herds of cattle grazing on the green slopes, and their farmyards filled with autumn produce, were distinctly visible, especially when the squadron drew near the mouth of the Dnieper.

The troops which sailed on this duty—one most brilliantly performed—consisted of the 17th, or Leicestershire, the gallant old 20th, the Royal Scots Fusiliers, and the old 57th (or Diehards), forming the First Brigade ; the 63rd, with two battalions of marines, formed the Second, in addition to which were some cavalry and artillery ; but they had not left the camp before Sebastopol many days, ere conflicting and distressing rumours began to prevail there that our forces had been defeated by Kokonovitch, the Russian commander, now a major-general, and that the 57th Regiment and the Royal Scots Fusiliers had been literally destroyed.

We are somewhat minute in our details of this expedition, as Julian's share in it proved a

very unfortunate one, though he had the good luck to be on board the *Valorous* (the flagship of Admiral Sir Houston Stewart), with his friend Colonel Kingsmuir, who had rejoined from a hospital ship, as he said, "to have one more shy at the Russians before going home."

His old friend, Lord Raglan, was dead, and thus he cared to remain at the Crimea no longer, and felt that he had done enough for glory now.

After his hut in the trenches, Julian felt himself, as it were, surrounded by all the luxuries of life on board the *Valorous*, even though he had been able, more than once before he sailed, to despatch his soldier-servant to Balaclava for many hitherto unusual comforts from the store of those specious rascals, Messrs. Hookitt and Pawsey.

On a bright evening, when the spires of Ac-metchet, and the rocky and varied Crimean coast, were visible in a blaze of sunshine from the windows of the state-cabin of the *Valorous*, as the Allied fleet stood across the Gulf of Perecop, or Kerkinet, and the officers were lingering over their dessert and wine :

"I owe all *this* to you, Colonel," said Julian in a low and almost tremulous voice, after he

had been silent for some time, amid the gay and rattling conversation of several officers of various arms of both services; and he almost feared it might all be a dream, from which he might awake to find himself in his wretched hut again, a private, or shivering half asleep among the gabions of the advanced parallels, a sentinel, in his tattered great-coat.

“Nay, nay,” said Kingsmuir, kindly, “take your wine, my boy, and don’t thank me; to yourself you owe all. Ah, if the old Captain had only lived to know it, and that you are now in the old corps he loved so well! Perhaps he does—who can say what the dead know, or do not know; or whether they even care for the events that occur on earth, all momentous as they may seem to mortals? But we won’t moralise—it is dreary work at best,” added the Colonel, as he drained a glass of Moselle, and held it out to be refilled by the marine who acted as waiter.

But it was impossible for Julian—practical though misfortune at home and the sufferings incident to war had made him—not to muse over all the strange past; of Kate and the Earl, of Mrs. Kingsmuir, of all the first-named was

to him once, in the time that seemed to have been ages ago, and the little, in one sense, she was to him now. Anon he would think of what he ought to be, and of his birthright—for he could little dream that in his father's home and household he was now acknowledged as—the Lord Hermitage !

“Heaven teach me to cease repining over the impossible,” he thought. “I am very ungrateful, I fear, to think of these things, when God has been so good to me ! ”

Then he was roused from his reverie by a clapping of hands, mingled with a hurrah.

“Pass the wine, gentlemen,” the jovial Admiral, who had first smelt powder at Flushing and Acre, was saying cheerily ; “we drink to the successful bombardment of Kinbourn, and the capture of that stout old blade, General Kokonovitch.”

“Bravo—another bumper to the first man inside the enemy's works ! ” added Kingsmuir.

On the 14th of October the fleet was off the scene of the intended operations.

Kinbourn lies in the government of Taurida, on a narrow peninsula, opposite to Octchakov, and at the mouth of the Dnieper.

Its situation renders it a place of great strength, but the locality labours under the serious disadvantage of having neither wells nor springs; thus fresh water can only be procured from the town just named, eleven miles distant.

Below the dark and massive fortress are a number of houses occupied by Russian peasants and seafaring folks employed in the lucrative herring and anchovy fisheries. Kinbourn, with the rest of the Crimea, was conquered by Russia, but has repeatedly been attacked by the Turks, and in 1787 was the scene of one of "the hero-buffoon" Suwaroff's famous victories, an event to which Kokonovitch made glowing reference more than once to his troops. Prior to this, in 1781, a civil war had broken out among the Crim Tartars, in which the Russians interposed, and in 1783, Sahim-Gheray, the last Khan of the Crimea, abdicated his power, which he transferred to the Czars.

This acquisition was confirmed by treaty with the Porte in 1784, since when all Taurida has been deemed a province of the Russian empire.

In beautiful order, with all their vast spread of white canvas swelling out before a soft breeze, snowy white, despite the smoke of their low raking funnels, and with their colours flying, the ships took up their position according to the orders of Admiral Stewart, those that ranked as line-of-battle, to engage the fort and two sandbag batteries at the point of the peninsula, anchoring in thirty feet of water at twelve hundred yards range—the *Montebello*, French line-of-battle ship, being the fourth from the south of their line, and the *Royal Albert* the southern ship of the British division.

The mortar vessels came to anchor at two thousand eight hundred yards from the shore, while the *Dauntless*, *Terrible*, *Tribune*, *Curaçoa*, and *Sidon* anchored off the north sandbag battery, with orders to fire steadily into the embrasures of the casemates, which were full of Russian troops.

On the same night, the 14th, the *Valorous*, with several French and British ships, forced the passage between Octchakov—which is now only a cluster of Russian cabins near a ruined citadel—and the peninsula of Kinbourn, and

getting into Dnieper Bay, completely invested the port.

On the 17th, without molestation from Kokonovitch, our troops, in heavy marching order, with arms loaded and bayonets fixed, while rending the air with cheers, were all landed from the line-of-battle ships, in the great launches and paddlebox boats, and began at once to intrench themselves on the sandy peninsula; the mortar and gun boats bombarded the works with incredible fury for three hours, without producing the least impression, and some bands of Cossacks, mounted on rough shaggy ponies, riding with short stirrups that brought the knee to the pommel of the saddle, and brandishing their long lances, the steel heads of which flashed in the setting sun, were visible as they scampered to and fro in the neighbourhood of Kherson, till vigorously attacked by some French cavalry, who routed them, sabring some and capturing others.

On this bleak peninsula our troops lay for the night in their great-coats, for they had not, like the French, *tentes d'abri*, which are simply formed in most instances by blankets stuck on bayonets, and they lacked the skill

possessed by our Allies for making little harbours formed of boughs of trees.

Julian's heart grew sad when he saw the free and jovial-looking Zouaves, with their madder-coloured breeches and red turbans, and, remembering poor Achille Richebourg, thought how happy that young Frenchman would have been to see *him* with epaulettes on his shoulders; but the majority of the French troops there were linesmen, or "Tourlourous," as the Parisians call them, a name which has supplanted the Jean-Jean, but means the same thing.

Julian had hoped that the Royal Scots Fusiliers would be the first regiment ashore, but that honour fell, by right of seniority, to the 17th, which sprang into the surf and formed up under arms with colours flying.

In the dull grey dawn of an October morning, when the sea was calm and the wind off shore, the gun and mortar boats got up their steam to open on Kinbourn. By this time the troops were all under cover, in works which cut off Kinbourn from the land side; the French had the direct line of operations against the place, while the British

guarded the rear from any attack in the direction of Kherson.

Kokonovitch, on finding the sap pushed to within seven hundred yards of his batteries, opened a dreadful fire from them, from guns which he fought *en barbette*. To this our gun and mortar boats responded, and the crash of their shot was terrible ; the whole sea on one side of Kinbourn was lashed into foam, from which spouts or great pillars, white as snow, were started incessantly by the falling shot and shell.

By eleven in the morning cheers in the trenches greeted the appearance of fire within the fort, where a conflagration broke out in the barracks and rapidly spread from end to end, filling the whole place with smoke and flame, the heat of which drove the Russians from their guns ; while, to enhance the confusion, incessant explosions of ammunition were heard from time to time, as magazines and tumbrils ignited and blew up. About this time another cheer greeted the disappearance of the Russian flag—St. Andrew's cross—which was shot away and not displayed again.

Kokonovitch made a desperate defence.

"We shall soon be done with those cursed Allies," said he confidently to Mouravieff, his second in command, who held the northern fort on the peninsula, "though Sebastopol has fallen. Their alliance won't last. The Briton, the Frank, and the Turk can only pull together like the pike, the crab, and the swan in Kriloff's fable," he added, referring to a political caricature of the time, then circulated in Russia.

A severe wound, received early in the bombardment, only served to add to his fury and resolution, and the doctors were without lint to dress it; in the true spirit of Russian speculation, the commissaries are alleged to have sold, secretly, all their lint and bandages to the Allied armies.

By the time the standard was shot away the cannonade from the fleet was simply tremendous, so enormous were the guns with which it was armed.

The French admiral in the *Asmodie*, and Sir Houston Stewart in the *Valorous*, came round the Spit Battery into Kherson Bay, followed by eleven great steamers, delivering slowly, in stately succession, their thundering broadsides

at the batteries as they passed, literally beating to pieces and ripping them up.

The sky seemed alive with flaming rockets and bursting bombs, and below it the fort was sheeted with red, roaring fire, for by twelve o'clock another conflagration had broken out within it.

Towering in their stately magnificence, with their lofty rigging and white canvas spread, the steam frigates took up their positions off the seaward face of Kinbourn, already sorely battered by the gunboats, and soon effected any destruction which the latter had left incomplete.

Grand and awful at this time was the storm of that mighty cannonade, to which Kokonovitch responded with eighty-one pieces of cannon and twelve great mortars; but around him bastions were being beaten to dust, and, blown about by the gentle breeze, the embers of the burning barracks and other buildings covered all Kinbourn and the Bay of Kherson.

Ere long we dismounted or smashed thirty-four guns on the works, but stoutly and bravely did the Russians handle those that remained; but still the broadsides came thundering from

the seaward, and still death and havoc, wounds and suffering, deepened around grim old General Kokonovitch.

While all this exciting work was in progress, Julian, with the rest of his company, was lying quietly *en perdu* in a sandy trench on the Kherson side; he was watching the bombardment through a field-glass, while some French cavalry were patrolling in the rear to watch the advance of any relieving force, which the British would have to keep in check.

But his time for rougher work was coming.

When Kokonovitch found that further defence was futile, he held a hurried council of war, and proposed to capitulate; but even then, amid the roar of the conflagration, the crash of falling walls that were shrouded in smoke, the explosion of bombs and rockets, tumbrils and magazines, and the thundering broadsides of the Allied fleet, making up a medley of sound that was not apparently of this earth, Saronovitch, a Polish officer, and two others, one an engineer and the other an artilleryman, all inflamed by fanatical fury and fiery vodka, swore, "by the life of the Czar, that they would not surrender, but would blow up the

magazine the moment the enemy entered Kin-bourn."

"This is madness," said Kokonovitch.

"It is not," they replied; "we can defend ourselves for a week yet."

"Impossible!—you have not been able to fire a shot for a quarter of an hour. Are you likely to be in a better condition two hours hence? And, above all, where are the survivors, of the carnage you court, to live?—already we have not a roof left to cover us."

Then, by order of Kokonovitch, an officer waved a white flag from the shattered ramparts, on which the firing instantly ceased, and there seemed a lull in the very air, as its last echoes died away on the sea, and when no sound was heard but the surf of the latter as it chafed against the walls of the fortress.

With white flags of truce displayed at their sterns, several boats now pulled in shoreward; and when the British admiral and Colonel Kingsmuir landed, they found the French general advancing to meet General Kokonovitch, who came forth alone and unattended, with a sword and pistol in his right hand and a pistol in the other.

The pistols he discharged into the earth in token of surrender, and threw the drawn sword at his feet.

“ Oh, Kinbourn! Kinbourn! ” he exclaimed, in a passion of bitterness and rage, while actually shedding tears; “ glory of Suwaroff, but scene of my shame, I abandon you! ”

Terms were given and accepted by all, even by Saronovitch; but again, when they were signed, his veteran leader wept, and covered his wrinkled face with his hands, after casting from him, with a hoarse malediction, the pen with which he signed them.

Then in the evening, amid the Rembrandt-like masses of lurid light and sombre shadow, in which Kinbourn seemed to be passing away, as the smouldering flames burst forth ever and anon, the garrison, consisting chiefly of the 29th Regiment, clad in grey capotes and black glazed helmets, without spikes, marched into our lines, and laid down their arms, in many instances—for all were tipsy with vodka—dashing their muskets, with hoarse and fierce execrations, at the feet of their conquerors.

Ere our troops marched in, Kokonovitch gave them the friendly warning that the flames

were now close on the powder-magazine ; thus steps were at once taken to avert what might have proved a lamentable catastrophe.

Mouravieff, who commanded in the northern fort, either was ignorant of all this, or affected to be so, and continued to blaze away with one large gun till a well-directed shot from the *Terrible* dashed the whole casemate to pieces.

Preceded by a vocal company (which many Russian corps possess), the prisoners marched to the beach for embarkation, and were at once despatched to Constantinople — all, at least, save Mouravieff and Saronovitch, who broke their parole of honour, and escaped together.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RECONNAISSANCE TOWARDS KHERSON.

THUS far we have detailed an operation of the Allies which was subsequent to the fall of Sepastopol, and has been completely forgotten amid the greater interest created by that event.

The fort of Kinbourn was now ordered to be put in a state of defence, and its enclosure to be divided between the British and French troops, or a portion of them, while in order to discover alike the strength and position of the enemy in the neighbourhood of Kherson, a reconnoissance was detailed for a two or three days' march—a *promenade militaire*, as the French laughingly called it—as General Liprandi was alleged to have some 22,000 men under his orders somewhere in the province ; but posted as the Allies were on the narrow peninsula of Kinbourn, with a powerful fleet and a swarm of gunboats on each flank,

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three times that number of bayonets could not have prevailed against them.

Julian, glad to escape duty with the working parties engaged in rebuilding the curtains, clearing out the ruins, placing and replacing heavy guns, and so forth, found that his company was detailed as part of the reconnoitring force, which consisted of 4,541 infantry, with 279 cavalry. There was novelty and excitement in a duty of this nature, as any hour of the day or night might bring them face to face with the main body of Liprandi's army, or with its scouting patrols.

Leaving behind the long, low, sandy spit of Kinbourn, above which towered the top hamper of the war-ships, and skyward, higher still, the towering smoke from the funnels of the gun-boats, the expedition departed.

It was now the end of October, a gusty month in that part of the world, and marked by cold rains and fogs. On every hand, as our troops marched, the country seemed to be a vast plain, intersected by numerous streams, tributaries of the Bug and Dnieper. In some places the rank grass grew so high as to conceal the cattle that pastured among it, and the

roads along which the force proceeded were simply marked by a ditch cut on each side.

The villages, the inhabitants of which are usually Bulgarian colonists, mixed with gipsies, Jews, and Tartars, were everywhere deserted on the approach of our troops, save in one, where an old Tartar peasant and his wife were found hidden up a chimney.

By the fourth day they had wasted all the district, by burning the villages, and capturing immense quantities of poultry, pigs, and fat-tailed Wallachian sheep, and also some of the native cattle, which are generally white or silver-grey, with long horns.

Encumbered by all this spoil, the troop of the little expedition wheeled about to return to Kinbourn; and, though unmolested as yet by the enemy, their movements had been closely watched by 200 Cossack lancers, who had retreated before them as they advanced, and followed them up as they now fell back.

Julian's company formed the rear guard, and the night was closing in, chill, dark, and misty, when an alarm was sounded, and the whole force halted. The rear guard was ordered to face about, as the hovering Cossacks

or some other force were alleged to be too close to be pleasant.

The place where they halted was reedy ground, which there swarms with wild ducks, geese, and pelicans, and also snakes of great size.

Julian was the only officer with the company; he was young, but on the alarm being given his own instincts instantly told him what to do. He remained quietly halted on the narrow path till reinforced, and then unfixed bayonets.

"From the centre extend!" was the next order, and away the men went, with a half-turn outwards, double-quick through the high reeds and brushwood, in what was then the fashion, six paces apart, in double file, the rear one regulating the distance, and the front looking to the direction. The moment the formation was complete they halted, and dropped, each man on his right knee, in skirmishing order, but nothing as yet was visible.

The bugle rang out "Advance!" and slowly and cautiously they proceeded to creep through the reeds and bushes, and, as the

position was one of considerable responsibility, Julian felt his heart beating high with ardour and excitement. Darkness had completely fallen now, and all was still save the sounds made by startled little earth-hares gliding to and fro, or flights of hawks that started from the gorse.

Suddenly an opaque mass in front, that appeared like a clump of brushwood or dwarf oak trees amid the moving trees, assumed the distinct aspect of a squadron of Cossack lancers, with the shafts of their weapons upright, at about four hundred yards distance.

Bang, bang, bang, went the Minie rifles, flashing out redly amid the tall reeds, and the sharp pinging of the elongated bullet which we first used in the Crimea was heard. Then a few gaps were seen, as man or horse went down among the enemy.

“Form a rallying square!” cried Julian. Again the bugle sounded, and despite the many obstacles presented by the ground, the soldiers—who, under whatever circumstances, never forget the instincts of the drill-yard—rushed to the centre and formed a square, the rear face of which reopened a fire upon the

Cossacks, who, instead of charging—being perhaps aware that a dozen of stout-hearted fellows formed thus are tolerably safe against a body of cavalry—scattered, broke, and began to fire with their carbines in a loose and desultory fashion.

The rear guard, having thus “felt” the foe, and given the necessary alarm and indication as to his whereabouts, began to fall back, firing the while, on the main body, the men reloading, casting about, and capping their rifles with admirable energy.

“Well done, lads—well done! Keep up your fire—pepper them well!” cried Julian, who already, in anticipation, saw himself, perhaps, thanked in General Orders for “his vigorous and gallant defence in covering the rear of the reconnoitring party;” and with this thought and hope a glow of genuine ardour and ambition, with the desire to live—or to die, if fate so willed it—with glory and distinction, swelled up in his heart anew.

But the Cossacks, who were commanded by a *pulkovnik*, or colonel, a man of undoubted bravery, were not disposed to let Julian’s little band have it all their own way, and now with

wild cries they unslung their long and heavily-headed lances, and closing their files, prepared for a charge. They were too genuinely Russian in nature and discipline to disobey their leader when ordered, for the Russian soldier, says Dr. James Browne, "is docile, submissive, and brave: like all slaves, he is supple, subservient and cunning: like all natives of northern regions, he is hardy, patient and enduring. He has no other thought than to do implicitly as he is desired; and there is a pertinacity in his nature which inclines him to persevere, or to stand firm, as the case may be, without troubling himself about consequences. His courage is the result of insensibility rather than of moral force of character. But there is, nevertheless, an element of indomitable ferocity in his composition; amidst all the apparatus and parade of civilisation he is still three parts a barbarian. Hence his most brilliant achievements have been performed under men upon whom the force of civilisation had made as little impression as on himself, and whom the instinct of sympathy had taught to develop his natural barbarism."

But to return to the present emergency. The Cossacks, after firing a ragged volley with their

carbines or pistols that were slung to the waist, rushed on with levelled lances, but had to recoil more than once before the steady fire from the rear face of the square, which was constantly renewed by men from the inner mass with rifles ready loaded, till the supports came up in strength, when the foe gave way and retired over the reedy ground, till they vanished into the mist and obscurity of the night.

We had a few men hit by pistol-balls, and others prodded by somewhat rusty lances; but none were killed. The loss of the Cossacks must have been severe from a steady infantry fire, and in addition to their casualties overnight they were somewhat roughly handled again, next morning, by shot and shell from a French gunboat that crept close in shore.

Ere this it had been discovered that the young subaltern who commanded the rear guard so well and bravely was missing!

“Where is young Melville—who saw him fall—who saw him last?” were the hurried questions of the colonel and adjutant, reiterated again and again by Colonel Kingsmuir, when the detachment marched, with all its plunder, into Kinbourn.

"Did he fall alive into their hands?" the latter asked, eagerly.

"Well, I hope not, sir," replied a soldier who was laden with the spoil of a poultry-yard.

"You *hope* not—why?"

"Because the beggars would be sure to make short and sharp work with the poor young gentleman, any way."

But no one had seen him, nor were any of his company, in the dark, the hurry, and fierce excitement of the whole encounter, aware of having seen him since the rallying square was formed about him. The roll was called, and every man answered to his name, though some looked faint enough, with bloody handkerchiefs tied in haste about their wounds. Julian alone was "missing"—an ominous word, which may mean prolonged agony, a death unseen and unknown, or a protracted captivity.

"He must have been struck by a stray bullet and have fallen," said the adjutant. "Poor fellow—he was a good officer!"

And then, after a time, all speculation ceased. Many fell daily, and many—too many—had fallen; so now one human life mattered little more or less.

But not to keep the reader in suspense, we may here state the cause of his disappearance. Julian, quitting the security given him by being in the centre of the rallying square, which surrounded him like a living wall, had pushed through the close files to the rear-front, if we may use such a term, there personally to encourage resistance; but his foot became entangled in a gorse bush, he fell heavily on his face unseen by all in the darkness, obscurity, and smoke. The retiring company left him behind, and when he staggered up, a dozen of Cossack lances were levelled at him, and he would have been pinned to the earth, there and then, without mercy, but for the exertions and authority of the *pulkovnik*, close to whom he most fortunately happened to be.

He was roughly collared and sent to the rear under escort, the sole trophy of the Russians after the fall of Kinbourn; and when day broke, and at the very time the French gun-boat was shelling the Cossack squadron till it galloped out of range, he was being conveyed inland, whither he knew not, with his right hand secured to the bridle of a Cossack horse, and three or four howling sons of the Don

riding about him, mocking and jabbering, and ever and anon, in pure wantonness, menacing him with the point, or accelerating his pace by a smart application of the ironshod butt, of their lances.

These men were Cossacks of the Don, and were mounted on small horses of a stunted but famous race, hardy, enduring, and courageous—qualities which, whether in men, cattle, or dogs, beseeem a mountain origin. They were well made, even handsome and martial-looking fellows, with elevated eyebrows and heavy dark moustaches ; they wore tall busbies of black fur, with crimson bags, and coarse blue jackets braided with yellow. Their high saddles were simply wooden frames, placed on the piece of folded felt which formed their couch at night, and they rode full-footed, with short stirrups, and always posted when at the trot—to Julian's eye a most unmilitary style of action and bearing.

He was divested of his sword, epaulettes, and sash, and much of the lace was torn off his coat from time to time ; thus he presented a sorry figure after he had proceeded a few miles with his escort. He was deprived of

his portemonnaie, but his pocket-book, containing the sole relic of his past life—the souvenir of Amy's kindness and tenderness—escaped, as the Cossacks searched about his knees for anything of value, their garters being the place where Russians usually carry or conceal their purses; but seeing, as the day drew on, that he looked faint and weary, one who was either more kindly disposed or less brutal than the rest drew a common soda-water bottle from his holster, and indicating that he might have a mouthful therefrom, handed it to Julian. The contents proved to be fiery vodka, a grain spirit (like the Turkish raki); and the Cossack also shared with him a piece of the black bread that was in his odiously dirty haversack; but the time was not one in which to be dainty or particular.

How long was this new state of affairs to last? thought Julian. When should he be released or exchanged? He might be a prisoner during a long and protracted war; he had heard of French prisoners who had languished in our British depôts for twelve years at a time, till all hope and desire for life had died away in their hearts. But a few

short hours before he had been at the head of his soldiers, in the full flush of ardour and a new authority, anticipating present praise and future honour.

Where were they all now ?

Two days he was compelled to march on foot, fettered as we have described, through a flat and uninteresting country, across comparatively valueless plains, where little corn was grown, but vast herds of cattle were fed for the tallow manufacture at Kherson, the capital of the province.

On the second day they entered a village in which the Jakoutsk battalion and the Erivan Grenadier regiment, two of the many corps whom we had beaten out of Sebastopol, were cantoned; and followed by a considerable crowd, composed of loiterers of both regiments, Tartars and Bulgarians, all more or less menacing and hostile in aspect and bearing, the solitary and luckless British prisoner was conducted by his escort to a *traktir*, or tea-house, the principal species of hotel in the place, wherein the colours were lodged, and the officer commanding had taken up his quarters.

As Julian's hand was unbound, and he was

conducted into the tea-room, the brick walls of which were alike destitute of paint or plaster, a group of Tartars, who were clad in a species of attire that looked like gaudy dressing-gowns, with gaily ribbed skull caps, and who were smoking long chibouks, started up with loud exclamations at his entrance.

This roused, with an interjection of anger, the Russian commanding officer, who, muffled in the inevitable capote, had been immersed in the columns of the *Moskauer Zeitung*, while imbibing his tea from a crystal tumbler in the old Muscovite fashion ; but we mean to say as little about Russia as possible, for does not Prince Dolgourauki, in "La Vérité sur la Russie," tell us that the natives alone can write about that half barbarous country ?

Glad to see an officer at last, Julian was approaching, with the intention of begging that his epaulettes should be restored to him and his parole of honour accepted, when the infantry *pulkovnik* raised his head, and he found himself confronted by—Ivan Mouravieff !

"By God and the Emperor !" he exclaimed in English ; "an island cur—an English dog—a sailor in a red coat !" Then seizing Julian

by the throat, he buffeted him in the face with a hand cased in a thick military glove till the blood flowed from his mouth.

"What is all this?" asked an officer coming forward, and who proved to be no other than Saronovitch the Pole.

"He insulted me on the day the Flag of Truce came, after the Inkermann sortie ; but, by the bones of St. Sergius, my turn for vengeance has come now !"

Weary with all he had undergone during the two past days, after the toil of the reconnaissance, somewhat faint by want of food, and confused by the weight and fury of this disgraceful assault, Julian, though his heart swelled with just indignation, and the proud, fiery blood of his race boiled, felt it sink within him.

In the power and at the mercy of a man like this—one who as a Muscovite, was without value for human life or pity for human suffering—prone, in the very lust of cruelty, to delight in the infliction of the latter—especially when his hate or other evil passions were excited, what had Julian to hope for at the hands of Ivan Mouravieff ?

CHAPTER IX.

PRISONER OF WAR.

RUSSIAN civil authorities are lawless, and still more so are the military, over any unfortunate who may be at their mercy. "If you have been robbed once," says a traveller, "do not get robbed twice by going to the police." Thus, for Julian to appeal to any other authority against Mouravieff was perfectly vain. Moreover, he appeared to be the senior officer in the place. But to repress anger was impossible.

"Colonel Mouravieff," exclaimed Julian, "this most infamous conduct to an unarmed prisoner shall be made known to all Europe!"

"Will it?" replied the other, mockingly; "Hospodi! Europe? that is a large word."

"Please God, it shall!"

"I shall take care of that," was the ominous response; "not that I care particularly whether it be known or not."

Meanwhile, Julian, whose handkerchief had been stolen, had no means of stanching the blood which was flowing freely from his lips, till a kindly old Greek priest—a man with a bushy silver beard—stepped forward and gave him one of some coarse grey stuff, at the same time saying something in a tone of reprehension to Mouravieff, who retorted by an exclamation of scorn; for however well-educated he may have been, the latter was evidently a lawless tyrant, with an ungovernable temper.

Very different indeed in face, aspect, and bearing were he and his helpless prisoner; and particularly in the form of the mouth did the two present a contrast. The lips of the Muscovite were thick and brutal as those of a bull-dog, while Julian's were delicate, well-cut, and indicative of birth, culture, and the highest order of refinement.

"Colonel Mouravieff," said he, in the desperation of the case, not unwilling to temporise if possible with the man, while he detested and despised him, "am I to understand by all this, and more than all, by your ambiguous threat, that my parole of honour is not to be accepted?"

"Yes—precisely so," replied Mouravieff, who, we have elsewhere said, spoke English with singular fluency.

"For what reason?" asked Julian, repressing his gathering wrath.

"You need scarcely ask when you remember your insulting conduct to me—the Colonel of the Jakoutsk Regiment."

"I do not comprehend you; in what manner?"

"When you, who now pretend to call yourself an officer, but whom I last saw as a private soldier, presumed to accuse me of acting as a spy, and that too, at one of the very gates of Sebastopol."

"I had to accuse you of more than that, as you know well, Colonel Mouravieff," said Julian, whose temper was rising, "but that is all past now. I am, like yourself, a commissioned officer, and I claim to be treated as one, and as a prisoner of war. You are perfectly aware that we have met elsewhere than at that gate of Sebastopol."

"And you pretend, or assume that——"

Mouravieff paused, for he was choking with rage, and certainly Julian would have found

perfect silence the better policy, but he unfortunately said,

"I have known you by that which is doubtless a badge of honour—your scar."

"Scar?" repeated Mouravieff, to whom this disfigurement was a source of genuine annoyance, and starting furiously from his seat, he dealt Julian a heavy blow with the hand on which he wore the great diamond ring, by the latter laying open the cheek of his luckless prisoner, whose face was again covered with blood.

Julian looked wildly round for a weapon; but luckily none was at hand, save those in the belts of the escort, who stood stolidly looking on a scene which, however outrageous and cruel, seemed nothing unusual to them. In his blind rage, Julian was about to spring on the aggressor, who read the coming action in his eye, and laid his hand on his sword; but at that moment Saronovitch threw himself between them, exclaiming:

"You are utterly forgetting yourself, Mouravieff; let this affair end, and remove the prisoner."

"I tell you, Saronovitch, the fellow is a Pole, though he pretends to be an Englishman

—one of the Island curs who hissed our Emperor in the streets of London.”

“A Pole?” said Saronovitch, pausing—himself a Pole, but a renegade one.

“And as such, one whom I could try at the drumhead and hang over that doorway.”

Then, as Mouravieff spoke, among the crowd of soldiers who gathered in the entrance to the *traktir*, Julian could see how every eye glistened, and every row of teeth seemed set in their lowering visages; and his heart grew sick, for if this new idea were adopted his life was lost!

“I have other views for him than the rope,” said Mouravieff, with a sudden laugh like a snort. “If not soon on the march for Siberia, with one side of his head shaved, I shall have him imprisoned for life in a fortress, with a 36-pound shot at his ankles—and that may be before the frosts of St. Nicholas come!”

Julian was scarcely aware of all the mischief the Russian was capable of working him; but he had heard stories of French prisoners, taken on the retreat from Moscow, being sent to Siberia, from whence they never returned; and he was not ignorant of the strange rumour

current in our Crimean army, and revived since from time to time, that for insulting a Russian officer, the son of an Irish peer, who had been taken prisoner at Balaclava, was sent as a State captive, beyond the waters of the Lena. All this kind of treatment was very different from that experienced by the officers and crew of our frigate the *Tiger*, when taken prisoners on the vessel running ashore near Odessa, in April, before Alma was fought. But now the Russians, especially such men as Mouravieff and Saronovitch, cared not what they did, in their hatred of their conquerors.

After Mouravieff's passion had calmed a little under the influence of Saronovitch and the Greek priest, Julian, though deeming it hopeless to advance again the subject of his parole, said firmly, but calmly,

"I cannot believe, Colonel, that you will venture to put your threats in execution against me, for there are higher authorities than you in Russia ——"

"Authorities that will believe my report—not yours."

"Then may I ask what you mean to do with me?"

"You may," replied the other, twirling his moustache, and eyeing his prisoner's anxiety of mind as a cat might play with a mouse.

"Well, sir?"

"I shall not tell you."

"Take him outside," said Saronovitch to the escort; "we will talk over this affair alone."

Julian was accordingly removed to a species of verandah that stood before the front of the *traktir*; his right hand was once more secured to the bridle of a Cossack's horse, and there he was permitted to remain under the eyes of an un pitying crowd, while his fate was deliberated upon by the renegade Pole and his superior officer.

Though his anxiety was irrepressible, and his annoyance extreme at being made a spectacle to a rabble of Tartars and Bulgarians, mingled with soldiers of the Jakoutsk Regiment, who, on the current rumour that he was a Pole, eyed him in no friendly manner, Julian was fain to accept from the Cossacks of his escort some of their odious black ration bread, and a draught of sour *quass* from a wooden bowl.

Thus hours passed wearily on; it could not be that they were spent in deliberation con-

cerning him, and he looked anxiously from time to time towards the tea-room of the *traktir*, from which he was not sorry to hear laughter come occasionally.

It was evident that the two officers were then talking of other subjects than him, and they were now smoking those fragrant *papirosses*, which were, after the Crimean war, introduced among us as *cigarettes*, just as cigars first were, after the strife in the Peninsula; they were evidently too—while leaving their unfortunate prisoner to shiver in the chill autumnal air, enjoying the glow of the ruddy *peitchka*, or brick Russian stove, which is built into the wall, and being open, is sometimes capable of heating even four rooms all at once.

Pasted on the wall above it was a Russian caricature of the English Premier bullying the Sultan into war, while a Russian soldier stood near with his bayonet fixed, with a frown on his face, to indicate that if this thing lasted much longer he would have to use it, and cross the Pruth—the movement which really inaugurated the war.

At last Mouravieff and the Pole arose, and

after making each a reverence to the Byzantine *eikon*, or image of some saint, before which a little red lamp was burning in a corner, they came forth. Neither condescended to bestow a glance upon the prisoner, but Mouravieff gave some order or orders in Russian to the non-commissioned officer commanding the escort, which mounted their shaggy ponies; and just as evening began to close in the march began, a forlorn and heartless one for Julian, who knew not where, when, or how it was to end.

After all that had passed, he could but anticipate the worst, if he failed to escape ere too great a distance was placed between himself and his comrades in Kinbourn.

Without money, arms, and a horse, if he was taken far it would be hopeless. With a haggard eye, he strove to note the features of the country and commit them to memory as he proceeded; but utter monotony characterised them all.

It seemed a point gained to be away from the brutal Mouravieff, but as to what might be the nature of the orders issued by that personage to the Cossacks the person most interested in them puzzled himself in vain to

guess; and, even had he been disposed to do so, the commander, as he spoke only Russian, was incapable of enlightening him.

Darkness fell, and the stars came out, and after they had proceeded several miles, the Cossacks halted before the gate of a large building, surrounded by a high wall, which Julian conceived, beyond all doubt, must be a prison, and his heart vibrated painfully when with the butts of their lances they thundered on the barrier. Julian, however, was mistaken as to the edifice, which eventually he discovered to be a large convent, and the abode of many Greek nuns.

The great gates had been secured, for the inmates had retired for the night; but that mattered nothing to the Cossacks, who by dint of shouts and not a few curses, as the sound thereof seemed to imply, roused the portress, who opened a door that led into the courtyard, and Julian found himself within the walls of a building of shadowy and mysterious aspect.

The Cossacks, six in number, unbitted, unsaddled, and stabled their horses in the court, saw that the gates were secured, and that Julian was also made safe, by having both his hands

tied so tightly and close that he could do nothing to escape from them. They then spread their pieces of coarse thick felt on the pavement of the corridor, with their swords and pistols under their heads, and were soon fast asleep.

Truly "a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of his possessions;" and no doubt those poor nomads of the Don thought so.

Julian remained unnaturally and keenly awake. Notwithstanding all he had undergone, he felt repose impossible; and he felt that fettered as he was, the smallest attempt to escape was also the same. His scarred cheek and swollen lips were yet sore and stiff with the blows of the cowardly hand that inflicted them.

The novelty of the place in which he sat, or half reclined, against the wooden pommel of a Cossack saddle, somewhat interested him, and almost drew him from his own thoughts.

Anon bells rang and some service of the night began; lights appeared in the long arched corridors, and waxen tapers were lighted before images of saints in niches and on

shrines ; and through an open door he could see the sparkling of jewels upon the great altar, and the gleam of the broad metallic horse-shoe shaped halos around the heads of old Byzantine images. Nuns, arrayed in white, flitted to and fro, looking indistinct and like vapory phantoms amid the dark or shadowy uncertainties of the long passages ; till stillness and silence stole over the place once more, and but for the stertorous snoring of his Cossack escort, Julian might have fancied the whole affair a dream.

Dawn, he thought must be approaching, when still forlorn, sad, and full of aching thoughts, he strove to sleep, as he knew not what the next day might bring forth. He closed his eyes as if to court slumber, but opened them again as a light flashed along the arched passage, from a door that opened into it.

The light came from a lamp held by the hand of a woman who, with eyes shaded by her hand, was regarding the group with some curiosity. That she was a lady was undoubted, by her bearing, grace, and the dazzling whiteness of the hand that shaded her dark and

sad, but tender and dreamy eyes. That she was not a nun was evident by her dark dress and the heavy masses of her black braided hair.

To Julian's eye she seemed like a pale, calm, beautiful statue. He rose and bowed, forgetting that in his torn and tattered uniform, with a face plastered with blood, his aspect could not be very prepossessing. She regarded him earnestly and sadly for a moment, gave him a slight bow in return, and shutting the door disappeared.

Her haunting face seemed like that of a spirit or vision, it was so strangely etherealised. The sadness of her expression seemed to indicate to Julian that she was aware fully that some terrible fate was awaiting him; he knew not what to think; but the longing for a weapon, for action, to be up and doing made every nerve quiver and every pulse beat like lightning.

CHAPTER X.

THE FLOWER OF THE FOREST.

SIR HARRY DRAKE, who, soon after the fall of Sebastopol had been prostrated by fever, and had gone to the odious hospital at Scutari, was thankful when able to change his quarters there for rooms in a comfortable Frankish Hotel at Pera, where he remained on sick leave, amusing himself and watching the course of events.

Sir Harry was well up in the list of captains in the Coldstreams; he was also lieutenant-colonel, for the palmy days of privilege were not yet over; and he might get a Line Regiment if he wished it; but the excitement of fighting was past.

Ever since the day of the Alma, Sir Harry had felt it to the full, and had enough of it. He had begun to miss sorely the society to which he had been accustomed. "Quartered in London, save when at Windsor or Shorncliffe, the Guardsman," says a writer, "has

every advantage that town life can offer, and can enjoy to the full all the charms and fascinations of good society. Unlike his less fortunate brother in the Line, he knows nothing of dull provincial towns, with their barrack monotonies, garrison-hacks, fifth-rate theatres, and indifferent amusements."

Thus, fighting over, or nearly so, we say, one of the "cracks" of the Coldstreams, Sir Harry missed the flirting, lounging, riding, hunting, and the mild duties of St. James's, the Bank, and Buckingham Palace, and shivered when he thought of Pera; yet there are to be found alike the comforts of Europe and Asia, as its houses are built after the Italian style; it is the head quarters of diplomacy, and the residence of all the dragomans; but a man of Sir Harry's temperament soon tired of it, and of the esplanade above the little burying-ground, the favourite resort of the Franks in the summer evenings, as from thence may be seen Stamboul, with all its domes and minarets, its cypresses, kiosks, and fluttering flags, and that part of the Golden Horn where the stately three-deckers of the Sultan are usually anchored.

But the monotony of smoking a pipe there may be varied by walks in the shady cemetery, with all its cypresses, or in those outskirts of Pera where all the fairs and holiday-makings are held, where booths of gay colours are erected, and story-telling, dancing, and singing are heard amid the last homes of the Frank and Armenian.

Amid his growing *ennui* Sir Harry experienced a species of fillip by a brief letter from Colonel Kingsmuir, detailing the result of the reconnaissance towards Kherson, and that Julian Melville was either killed or missing—that no trace of him could be found, dead or alive.

Sir Harry's natural regret at this event, which had been one of every-day occurrence since our landing at Eupatoria, gave place to an emotion of pleasure at the conclusion of the Colonel's letter.

"Only think," it continued, "the Deloraines are coming out here in the Earl's yacht; what a freak—what an insanity—to this place, of all places in the world! However, I shall see my little Kate again, and go home with her. Your old friend Amy Kerr accompanies them."

Most welcome did this news prove to Sir Harry, who looked with genuine relish and longing to the advent of the yacht and its fair passengers, and impatiently awaited her arrival in the Bosphorus.

"Kate," continued the Colonel's letter, "tells me that she has a wonderful piece of news to tell, which will astonish both you and me; but to keep me on the tenter hooks the little gipsy is resolved to let me have it verbally."

Sir Harry naturally thought what news could the Countess have that would interest him, unless it referred to Amy, and that his last letter had led her finally to accept his proposals. His heart beat lightly and happily at the idea.

He recalled their parting, and his passionate farewell of her, on the evening before the Guards marched, and he thought of all that passed and all he said, but said in vain, and which if it was fluent, was not very rational perhaps; but what love-making ever is?

Amy had relented at last; the dangers he had dared in the Crimea, the illness he had undergone at Scutari, his unwavering faith and love to herself, had made Amy relent, and

this no doubt was the surprising secret of her bosom friend and gossip the young Countess !

He knew well the rig of the Earl's yacht the *Flower of the Forest*, and now he spent whole days in making inquiries concerning her, and watching the shipping that came round Seraglio Point ; but she seemed long, long of coming.

Meanwhile, the yacht, after long delays at Corsica and Sardinia, Palermo and Trapania, in Sicily, reached Malta, and till then, Lord Deloraine saw none of the newspaper comments or paragraphs, to avoid which, quite as much as to obey his medical advisers, he had travelled Eastward. But as many of the public prints had preceded him, of course by steamer, he found Mrs. Kingsmuir, who occupied handsome rooms in a hotel in the Strada Forni, at Valletta, *au fait* at the whole affair of his first marriage, and of all the *on dits* concerning it : " Remarkable discovery of a lost heir ; " " Romantic event in a noble family," &c.

Certainly the old lady was in a great fume, and naturally disposed to deem, as a mother, that her darling Kate had been very ill-used in the entire matter, which, had any little ones

been forthcoming, would have been much worse ; hence, she could barely be civil to Gerard, who accompanied the Earl, and gave the latter such a reception as put poor Kate in floods of tears, and made Deloraine wish that, instead of visiting the Mediterranean, he had sailed in search of the North-West Passage.

Mrs. Kingsmuir was undoubtedly a woman of the best style in appearance and bearing ; there was something striking in her delicately cut nose, her smooth forehead, and bands of brown hair, growing silvery ; but her clear, sharp scrutiny of eye, over, under, and through her gold eye-glasses, worried the fiery Earl of Deloraine.

Kate's emotion concerned the Earl most, as his love for her and admiration of her were the chief redeeming points in his character ; but as for her mother ——

“ D—n it ! ” he muttered ; “ it is perhaps a peculiarity of the sex—yet women can never leave well alone. Why should Mrs. Kingsmuir keep nagging at me, and about what—so far as *she* is concerned ? ”

And it was doubtless apropos of those same paragraphs that Gerard, now with

“Honourable” prefixed to his name, received a communication from the venerable, courtly, and white haired bibliopole, to the effect “that his book was finding its way at last—was going up in fact,” that it had actually been pirated in New York, and that another edition of “The Rhinns” was certain to be called for very soon ; a notice with which Gerard, despite his literary ambition, very calmly lit his pipe, as he lounged on the poop of the yacht, and gazed at St. Elmo and all the mighty batteries of Malta, bristling with black cannon tier above tier.

Gerard was the least selfish of human beings, and was, moreover, one of the most thoughtful and generous. He had cleared the name of their dead mother, through means given to him by a source bewildering and beyond his comprehension ; he had established his brother’s position as Lord Hermitage beyond all doubt and cavil ; of himself he never thought, and life—but for one reminiscence that came to him ever and anon—seemed good, and gay, and happy now, “like a great bright star come down from heaven.”

Gerard, amid all this, thought of his mother lying far away and all unpitied in her grave, by him who had wronged her, and by cruelty and falsehood broken her heart ; and when he listened to the voice of the Earl, the voice of his father, he strove hard, but in vain, not to think of these things at all. But—

“ Kindred blood, our proverbs deem,
Is warmer than the mountain stream,”

and perhaps now, influenced by this, or reconciling himself to the inevitable, the Earl had begun to like Gerard ; he was so gentle, attentive, and considerate to all ; and then his conversation proved ever full of interest, as he seemed master of almost any subject.

There was one thing the Earl could not get over, and yet he never recurred to it. How, when, or where, and from *whom* did Gerard gain intelligence of the existence of those papers on which so much had hinged ?

On that subject Gerard never advanced a hint ; and Kate, proverbial female curiosity apart, from a natural sense of delicacy connected with the whole affair, never questioned him about it.

Gerard felt most delighted when he could hear the Earl talk of the absent Julian, now involved in perils all unknown to them, and of which they could not have the slightest conception; and, for two reasons, he seemed not disinclined to take a certain interest in his eldest son; Julian was his heir, the heir to many old ancestral glories; the other cause, which, perhaps, induced the interest, together with a little human feeling, was his own failing health—failing ere life was much past its prime.

Ere he left London, there were, so said the leading members of the faculty, indications—they might be fanciful, or they might be real—that a cough he had, one exactly the same as his lordship's mother had suffered from ere her early demise, might prove that some complaint of the lungs was creeping upon him, unless great care—great care indeed—was taken; so they pocketed the guineas and left him in great fear; yet he bestowed his malison upon them for the suggestion.

What malady could he be suffering from?

Past dissipation no one suggested, though many did tonics. Perhaps it was a case of the

"Devil was sick," &c. Let us hope it was something better; but there were times when the Earl began to reflect after his own fashion.

"A hacking cough, inflammation in the throat, inhaling steam from a kettle, and down in the dumps, d——n it! here's a situation for the once lady-killing Lord Deloraine!" thought he, as he sat cushioned up in the cabin, with "a great hulking son," as he deemed Gerard, hanging kindly over him, when the yacht ran into the harbour of Valletta.

Deloraine feared, yea, had ever hated, the idea of death; he could never realise it, or the fact that it is as natural to die as to live, or to be born. But now it seemed unpleasantly close, if all those fellows hinted were true, and yet he felt hale and strong, Why should it be?

His lordship's once luxuriant hair — of which, in times past, he had given away enough to make a wig, in golden lockets — was growing thin now; though still carefully parted in the middle, it was becoming interwoven with grey hairs to such a provoking extent that to twitch them out was futile, and his valet had even dared to tell him so.

After the unpleasantness of the meeting at Malta, Kate was not sorry when that historic isle was left behind, and also that her irate mother remained at Valletta. She was in no mood of mind, even when tempted to meet her husband, to face a voyage to the Bosphorus, and through the Euxine, in a yacht, however luxuriously it might be fitted up.

And Kate, as the great harbour lights of Valletta melted into the evening sea astern, said, with a bright smile, to her old friend Gerard, that she did not find her life as a step-mother a very trying one; but she did not add that now the new light shed upon the Earl's past made her position as a wife a disappointed one.

As the yacht hauled up for the Archipelago, Amy felt her heart literally dancing within her at the prospect of seeing Julian once again, and of all the wonders she was to look upon. She had actually been trying—and blushing so prettily while she did so—how her name looked as “Amy Hermitage.” Indeed, had her blotting-pad been examined, it might have revealed that she had erewhile been testing

how it looked as "Amy Melville," when she knew nothing of the fortune or rank that awaited Julian.

To be the step-daughter of Kate! "How strange! what fun! what joy!" said the two girls together; for matron though she was, in exuberance of spirits, and in years nearly, Kate was but a girl still.

"Shall I ever win Julian?" said Amy, dreamily breaking a short silence.

"Don't fear," said Kate; "no woman—especially a charming one like you—ever yet failed in winning any man whom she really loved, or even wished to win through vanity."

"Do you really think so?" asked Amy, brightening.

"I do."

"Oh, what would your mamma think of me, if she heard me speaking thus?" said poor Amy.

CHAPTER XI.

OFF STAMBOUL.

BY the manner and voice of Amy, when she spoke of Julian to Gerard, the latter—whom she ever found a willing listener—soon discovered that the old love he knew she always had for his brother existed still, and, as he greatly admired and esteemed the girl for her great goodness of heart, purity of thought, apart from the charms of her person and manner, he began to indulge in dreams of a bright and happy future for them both.

“Gerard,” said she, one beautiful evening (when the yacht was running steadily on a gentle side wind), when seated among some cosy cushions, on a kind of sofa at the taffrail, “have *you* never been in love?”

“At home, in Ettrick, you never suspected me of that weakness,” he replied, smiling into her coy, upturned face.

“Ah, but since—since you left you must

have been in many places, and seen many faces," pursued Amy; "ah, I see your colour changes," she added, laughing; "and that tells a tale."

"If I have been,"—he began, and then hesitated.

"With whom—with whom—do tell me; we are such old friends, Gerard?" she said, coaxingly.

"Do not ask me, Amy dear."

"Why?"

"Simply because I cannot tell you."

"Say rather you wont," she continued, with an affected pout on her cherry lips.

"It is not so, Amy," replied Gerard, as he thought of, and repeated the lines,

"There are things of which I may not speak;
There are dreams that cannot die;
There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak
And bring a pallor to the cheek,
And a mist before the eye."

"And does the memory of your love cause all this, Gerard?" asked Amy, softly, while regarding him with an interested and puzzled expression, but Gerard was looking at the horizon, and made her no reply.

"You are silent," she persisted ; "have you never met with your ideal ?"

"I have, and—yet have not."

"You have, and yet have not ?" exclaimed Amy, laughing.

"My ideal, you say ?" said Gerard, as if full of thought.

"Yes—a Salome, for instance ?"

Gerard started at the name.

"She is but a fancy—a character in a novel—an unreality—why speak of her ?" he asked, sharply and gloomily.

"Because you spent so much trouble and care in describing her, and we all came to the conclusion that she was the ideal your mind depicted, or dwelt on, as the kind of woman you could love. Gerard," said the girl suddenly, as she saw that he grew deadly pale, "have I said aught that pains you ?"

"Yes," said he, in a low voice ; "but unintentionally, I know, Amy."

"Then pardon me," said the girl, pressing his hand between her own two, and she never resumed the subject, as she saw it contained some mystery that Gerard wished to avoid, or was striving to forget ; but knowing of old

that he was always somewhat of a dreamer, she hoped that, at worst, it was some poetical fancy—some halo cast by imagination round a girl who had deceived him, and that in time it would pass away.

It was with equal delight and excitement that she and Kate too looked forward to beholding those lands and scenes about which all the prints of the day and the thoughts of the people at home were full—localities unknown to the Britons before—Eupatoria, Sebastopol, Balaclava, and the heights of Alma—unknown before, we say, but now “familiar in their mouths as household words;” for the *Flower of the Forest* was bound for the Euxine, and in due time it was hoped they should see both Julian and Colonel Kingsmuir.

But the Sea of Marmora, Stamboul, Scutari, and the Bosphorus had first to be passed ere the *Flower of the Forest* cleft the waters of the Euxine with her keel.

“The isles of Greece, and all that sort of thing,” did not interest my Lord Deloraine now. He had “done” them all years ago, in that same yacht, with the little fair-haired

Sonnenberg, and in other yachts with faster companions than poor innocent Kate had the least idea of; but *blasé* though he was, he found it impossible to observe without amusement and even pleasure the genuine delight of his present companions, who were so guileless, fresh, and full of enthusiasm for everything they saw, every sea-bird that passed them on the wing, and every isle and headland that came in sight, so "John Murray," and the most powerful lorgnettes were in constant requisition; as were also—as cicerone—the readily-accorded services of Bob Rowlock, the master of the yacht, a fine old "hard-a-weather" seaman, silver-haired and ruddy-faced, who had once been gunner's-mate on board a frigate, under old "fighting Charlie" at the bombardment of Acre and elsewhere; and thus, by his old instincts, he took great pride in keeping up discipline, and having the yacht's twelve brass 9-pounders bright as burnished gold, and all her fighting paraphernalia—pikes, pistols, and cutlasses—sometimes necessary in these waters, "ship-shape," and in working order.

The *Flower of the Forest* was a beauty, and

the pride of the Royal Eastern Yacht Club, and on a taut bowline Bob Rowlock was wont to aver that she could nearly sail in the wind's eye, so closely could she be hauled; yet she was rather taut rigged—a kind of brig forward and schooner aft—of some three hundred tons burden. Her bowsprit and foremast were strong and heavy spars, while her mainmast was long and tapering, and seemed to have too little to support it in the way of shrouds and stays, but these were of great strength and tension.

Her spars aloft were in the same proportion, and tapered away through topgallant and royal mast, till they looked like fishing-rods against the sky. She carried an enormous spread of snow-white canvas, and in port always had the Earl's yellow family banner, with its blue bend, charged with a star between two crescents, flying at the mainmast head; while his motto, *Amo*, appeared on everything, from the breeches of the brass guns to the silver plate in the cabin.

The latter was fitted up with the luxuriance of the boudoir in Park Lane; there was even a fernery around the rudder-case filled with

beautiful exotics; but the pictures of famous pets of the ballet, crayons from the round, and nude studies from the antique, with which it had once been hung for the delectation of Deloraine and his former fast friends, had now, of course, all given place to decorations of a very different character.

The yacht was careening over the dancing waves on a taut bowline, heading for the Dardanelles at last. As she ran through the Archipelago she passed the Isle of Serpho to leeward; and anon Thermia, whose boiling springs flow downward to the sea, rose to windward. Then Negropont—whilom Venetian land, when Venice was in her glory—receded astern, and all around was then a heaving waste of blue and sunny sea, with its skimming and dripping sea-birds, its sense of vast expanse and freedom, its fresh and briny odour, and, after a time, the classic shore of Asia Minor came in view.

On an evening of rare loveliness, when the sky was like ether, the entrance of the Bosphorus began to narrow ahead. Eastward the glassy undulations of the sea were rolling in golden light around the point of

Chalcedon, but they had tints of silver and crimson in the setting sun, as its rays faded out on the snow-capped summit of Olympus around Seraglio Point, while Stamboul, in all its aspect of external splendour, rose in view, with its marble domes, gilded pinnales, that glitter amid groves of undying verdure, its long, shadowy arcades, and the carved minarets of more than a thousand mosques.

The canvas of the yacht had barely been furled, and her anchor dropped at the Golden Horn, when a double-oared caique or Turkish wherry shot off from the shore, and, after being nearly swamped or run down by the gorgeous state barge of some official, propelled by sixteen long sweeps, came sheering alongside, and there sprang on board Sir Harry Drake.

He had early notice of her approach from the Scutari side, and had for the occasion made a more careful toilet than he had achieved since our troops landed at Eupatoria.

The half-soldier, half-brigand costume in which he was wont to figure before Sebastopol had now completely given place to the

simple and accurate attire of an English gentleman, and nothing of the Crimea remained about him save his bronzed and sunburnt face, and the bushy beard, which the campaign then first introduced into the hitherto closely-shaven British army, where, save in the cavalry, not even the moustache was then permitted.

The young baronet, after all his roughing it in the trenches, and his sickness at Scutari, seemed happy, hearty, and jolly, for the time so long looked for had come at last.

"Harry Drake, by all that is wonderful!" exclaimed Lord Deloraine; "now where on earth have you dropped from?"

"Pera last," replied Sir Harry.

"I thought you were with the army."

"Been dodging about here on sick-leave—heard you were all coming out, and so waited."

"All—we are but a small party—the smallest that ever sailed in the *Flower* before."

Small though it was, it contained all the world held for Sir Harry Drake. A face was before him again—a fair and smiling one,

with sparkling dark blue eyes, a row of matchless little teeth, and rippling hair of sunny brown—the face of her he had never ceased to think of, and now the greeting and hand-shaking all round were certainly more impulsive than they would have been in the region of Park Lane.

As for Amy and the young Countess, it seemed as if Sir Harry would never tire of looking in their faces. Since that eventful morning when the Guards marched, followed by the warmest and the proudest wishes of all London, he had seen nothing like them in beauty, style, or costume. They seemed like a glimpse of Regent Street, the Row, and home again, with their charming smiles, their braided hair—braided as only the deft hands of an English maid could do it—their gloved hands and perfect *tout-ensemble*, after Balaclava, Pera, and all the rest of it.

Then he and they had innumerable questions to ask, and answers to receive, concerning mutual friends.

“How delightful it is to see your fresh and charming faces again,” said Sir Harry, for the second or third time; “by Jove, I have been

getting quite savage in my taste among the people here after the wild work at Sebastopol! Of course you will be doing all the lions of Stamboul, the Seraglio, St. Sophia, the Suliemanaye mosque, and all the rest of it, and I shall be so glad to talk guide-book!"

"Scarcely, just now," said Lord Deloraine, with a little heightening of the colour in his face as he thought of the explanations to come. "We are anxious to get a squint at Sebastopol, the place of which all the world talks at present, and then, as Rowlock says, we shall haul up for home."

"Oh, yes, we are all dying to see Sebastopol!" said Amy, full of one thought, and bestowing on Gerard a glance not unnoticed by Sir Harry, who eyed him sharply through his glass, but could detect nothing of the lover in *his* eye or bearing to cause alarm.

"Many, too many, have had to give their lives for a sight of the fatal place," said Kate.

"I have two months' leave yet, but shall rejoin soon," said Sir Harry to the Earl, while looking furtively at Amy, who seemed wholly occupied with a sleeve-link; "the Brigade of

Guards is still at Balaclava, but everything points to peace—the Russians have had enough of it !”

“Peace—thank Heaven !” exclaimed Kate.

“We can give you a passage back with us,” said Deloraine, as he led the way down the polished mahogany stairs to the sumptuous cabin, where servants were lighting the rose-coloured swinging lamps that hung in elaborate chains of Venetian bronze.

“Then you actually mean to go—and you ladies too ?”

“Undoubtedly, Sir Harry,” said Amy, a little petulantly ; “for what else did we come here ?”

“But it seems most eccentric, a trip to the Black Sea,” persisted Sir Harry, laughing ; “at this season, too.”

“But we have our reasons, apart from my—my Lord Deloraine’s health,” said Gerard, “nor are we alone in the fancy. Lord Cardigan has his yacht at Balaclava, and others have gone, while a whole fleet of English yachts went with Napier’s expedition to the Baltic.”

“Well, I shall be glad to go with you.

Wine—thanks. Moselle and seltzer—this is true civilisation!" said Sir Harry, as Funnell, the old family butler, placed the glittering cut decanters on the table, without fear of having them swept to leeward now.

He glanced at Amy from time to time, but her eyes met his with such perfect confidence and candour that he began to feel intuitively that his case was perhaps a hopeless one still, though he was too much of an Englishman not to have an uncommon amount of confidence in himself.

At Scutari and Pera none of the paragraphs we have referred to had reached him, so he was rather mystified by the presence of Gerard, and ignorant of *who* he was, or in what relation he stood to the little party on board the yacht, and with whom he seemed to be perfectly *en famille*. He had certainly been introduced to the baronet by name, but that, of course, did not enlighten Sir Harry.

The latter thought he seemed somewhat familiar—too much so—with Miss Kerr, whom he called "Amy," while she named him "Gerard." Was all this to be deemed as indicative of some affair got up since he

left London, and had been living like a gipsy before Sebastopol, and facing death hourly in those horrible trenches ?

A little time would soon show, he thought, and indeed he soon learned that, as a lover, he had nothing to fear from Gerard, and as the conversation proceeded—they had all so much to discuss—again he surrendered himself to the soft influence of the girl's beauty and presence ; it was impossible not to feel both powerfully, after all that had passed in London, and after a separation that had seemed so interminably long, by the vast number of exciting and desperate events that were crowded into the term of it ; but Amy shrunk nervously from any renewal of the old story, as she seemed suddenly to become aware that the circumstance of *her* coming eastward in the yacht was liable to put her in a false position with Sir Harry, and rather warranted him in feeling encouraged to renew his addresses.

“ I cannot tell how supremely happy I am to see you again, Miss Kerr, and to be near you,” he said in a soft voice. “ Could I but call you Amy ! ” he added in a lower and

tremulous voice; "the title to do so would indeed be some reward after all I have undergone."

"Ah, you have been in great peril, doubtless," said the Countess, coming to Amy's relief.

"But never so much as at Inkermann, where a brave fellow, one of our Brigade of Guards, saved my life and protected me from five Russian scoundrels, killing or putting to flight the whole of them, when I was lying helpless under their hands. He was a singular fellow, too," continued Sir Harry, as he proceeded to tell the story of the *rencontre* at Balaclava, the bottle of wine wanted for the wounded Zouave, and the handkerchief so treasured by the private soldier. "A handkerchief of *yours* as it proved eventually to be, Miss Kerr," he continued, "and for which, as a souvenir of the past, I offered him any money, but in vain. Neither would he condescend to tell me how he became possessed of it," added Sir Harry, with a little hauteur of manner.

"Of mine?" said Amy in a faint tone.

"Yes; of yours."

She was blushing scarlet now, and felt ready to sink, as she perfectly remembered the day and occasion when Julian retained it in remembrance of herself, and a cloud began to gather on the brow of the Earl, who knew the explanations that were at hand; while Gerard, full of the keenest interest, seemed to drink in the words of the narrator, who, puzzled by the effect his words produced, was thinking, with a gust of jealous bitterness:

"Could she have known and loved this fellow when he was soldiering in London? Women do such mad things where men are concerned!"

"He loves me," Amy was thinking fondly, amid all her confusion; "oh, yes, he must surely have loved me then, and does so still."

She volunteered no explanation, and poor honest Sir Harry proceeded to narrate some other anecdotes of Julian, showing how high was the character he had won, all ignorant of how he was cutting the ground from under his own feet, and fostering and adding to the girl's most unworldly and romantic regard for one she had never ceased to love.

"Then he was an old friend of yours, I presume, Miss Kerr, and had seen better days, Colonel Kingsmuir told me," said Sir Harry, breaking an awkward pause.

"Yes," said Amy faintly, "an old and very dear friend."

"Come!" said Sir Harry cheerfully, "then that explains it all; but I suppose you have heard what has happened to him?"

"Happened?" exclaimed his hearers.

"Yes," replied Sir Harry, now fairly taking courage and warming with his subject; "a few days after Kinbourn was captured, he served with the column detached for a few miles towards Kherson. He commanded with equal skill and bravery the rear-guard when attacked in the dark by Cossacks; but when day broke he was found missing, which in Russian hands means neither more nor less than killed, I fear, poor fellow."

Amy gave a wild glance at Gerard, whose face assumed an expression of horror, and laying her head on Kate's breast, burst into silent and bitter weeping, which she strove in vain to control, greatly to the astonishment of Sir Harry, who pulled his long moustaches,

and looking with perplexity at the Earl, who, to do him justice, seemed greatly startled, said :

“ Pray forgive me, but I seem most unhappily to be the harbinger of evil tidings here.”

“ It is the roll of the yacht,” murmured Amy, forgetting that the brigantine was quietly at anchor in harbour.

“ You speak of our dearest friend,” said Kate, in a voice full of sorrow.

“ And of my brother, Sir Harry,” said Gerard ; “ oh, tell us all you know of this affair—when and how it happened ! ”

Sir Harry knew little more than Colonel Kingsmuir had told him, with some other, and he hoped exaggerated, scraps of information, picked up among sick and wounded men at Scutari, but he repeated all he knew, and kindly strove to rekindle the hope that his first words had crushed at one fell swoop.

Amy’s heart was so full of emotion, mingled grief, horror, and anticipation of the worst, that she could scarcely hear rightly after the terrible tidings given by Sir Harry Drake, who was too good-hearted not to feel

shocked at the result they produced; nor could she distinguish the voices of those who addressed her or each other. She felt like an automaton, and her sensations were precisely those of Gerard; but great indeed was the young baronet's astonishment when the Earl, taking advantage of the situation, and the sensation excited, with real, or more likely assumed, interest in his voice, and with some dignity of manner, informed him *who* the unfortunate Julian was, "a son long lost and only found lately—Lord Hermitage," he was pleased to say.

Julian dead, or a prisoner in the hands of those merciless Muscovites, with whose atrocities the papers had been teeming, since the murder of the Eddingtons and butchering of the helpless Lord Chewton at Alma, to the bayonetting of the wounded in the Redan—it was too terrible to think of! For years past and gone had the loving and affectionate Gerard lived in, and lived on, the anticipation of one day hailing his elder brother as the Lord Hermitage and heir of Deloraine, and clearing their mother's name and fame—and now—now that he had achieved it all, and

that the time was at hand to announce it to Julian, where was he ?

"How cruel," he exclaimed, "is Fate !"

The Earl had, of late, really been desirous of making Julian some reparation—he scarcely knew what—beyond all he had desired his lawyers to do, per deed ; and *now*——

"The devil—it is just my luck !" thought his lordship, as he carefully selected a mild Havannah from his silver cigar-case, and handed the latter to Sir Harry.

He was actually not without a certain emotion of compunction at the tidings of the latter. A turn of illness—the cough he had—just such as his mother had, affrighted him, and had not been without a salutary effect upon him ; thus, he was not quite the same callous man who saw Julian crushed under his horse's hoofs, and neglected him so cruelly while in the hands of the doctor. He had schooled himself into accepting and welcoming Julian as the Lord Hermitage—his son and heir, and now he felt a sense of—disappointment at least.

Lord Deloraine had undergone Mrs. Kingsmuir and all the newspaper paragraphs which

she had carefully cut out and kept for his special delectation ; he had quite succeeded in pleasing and soothing Kate, whom he had dreaded more than all at first ; and he had supposed, and knew perfectly well, what the gossip of the clubs would be and must have been : “ Look ye here,” and “ Don’t you know—rum story about Deloraine,” and so forth, in the bow windows of Pall Mall.

Now, the estates, failing Gerard, who did not seem to be a marrying man, so far as he could see, would go eventually to the kinsman he so hated, while the ancient title would, in the end, become extinct !

“ If I should be the Lord Hermitage, after all—after all, and not dear Julian,” thought Gerard, with a kind of wail in his heart, if we may use the expression, “ I shall loathe the title ! Oh, I reckoned not on a catastrophe like this ! ”

To Kate and Amy it had been wonderful as a realised dream to be actually going to sleep in their usual cabins, and in the harbour of Constantinople ! But we fear they slept little that night ; for one thought of mingled doubt and terror, filled the hearts of both.

Sir Harry, anxious to put the best face on a bad subject, strove to infuse some hope into the heart of Gerard, with whom he lingered long on the deck of the yacht that night, smoking, and talking of the events of the war, and ever and anon recurring to Julian, till at last he grew weary of the subject; for he shrewdly suspected now *who* was his rival, and to feel a very warm or vital interest in the event at Kherson was, perhaps, rather more than might be expected of him.

Constantinople had not then been even partially lit with gas, and as the lights died out in succession in the houses, darkness stole over the city; but not silence, for the air was literally loaded, as usual, by the howling and barking of the thousands upon thousands of homeless and deserted dogs, waking the echoes of the otherwise deserted streets.

A boat was lowered, by order of Rowlock, to take Sir Harry ashore, after which he had to make his way to his hotel through the lanes of Pera, narrow, muddy, splashy, dark, and disgusting, with high, quaint tenements of wood beetling over them; but on the

morrow he was to join the yacht finally for the Black Sea, and was not without hope, even yet, of "making his innings," amid the many convenient opportunities afforded by propinquity and a voyage on the waters.

CHAPTER XII.

JULIAN'S PRISON.

DAWN revealed to Julian that the convent to which his escort had brought him, with what ulterior object he could scarcely divine, was near a battery and little village on a high cliff that overhung the sea ; and, as he afterwards discovered, near Cape Kaldantin, which butts into the Gulf of Perecop, about fifteen miles from the mainland of the Crimea, and one hundred from Sebastopol, as the crow flies.

The following day, he expected his miserable route, on foot, fettered to a Cossack stirrup, would begin again ; but it was not so, for the din of brass drums, about noon, announced that Mouravieff had come to Kaldantin with his little column to occupy the village and strengthen the gun-battery ; thus several days passed on monotonously, while Julian remained in doubt and perplexity,

a prisoner, in a detached part of the convent, in which his enemy and Saronovitch had established their headquarters, and in the court of which, overlooking the sea, he was permitted to take the air, but under the supervision of an armed sentry from the quarter-guard.

It soon became apparent that considerable doubt and wavering prevailed in the mind of Mouravieff with regard to the movements of his separate command, which consisted of two battalions, the Jakoutsk and Erivan regiments, with four guns, and some Cossacks ; and also as to the movements of General Liprandi with other troops at Octchakov.

Reports at this time were current that our troops, after capturing Kinbourn, were about to attack Kaffa, on the south-east coast of the Crimea ; and everywhere it was said that the French field force near Belbec was falling back on a strong position beside the Alma, that a new armament against Fort Constantine at Sebastopol was about to be detailed, and that most of the Russians everywhere else throughout the Crimea were retreating towards the Isthmus of Perecop. Yet Moura-

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Russian guard, often stale salted fish, tough, coarse ration beef, black bread, and sour quass, that made him shudder when he tasted it. He was learning daily that certainly a Russian guard-house was not the place for cultivating epicurean tastes; while all the delicacies that wealth and culinary art could furnish—Perigord pies, pâtés de foies gras, poultry and game, ham and tongue decorated to absurdity, jellies, creams, and trifles, hot-house fruits, ices, coffee, and liqueurs—were as every-day condiments on board the *Flower of the Forest*, then just quitting the Bosphorus and rounding Faranaki in Asia—a cape so called from the lighthouse, which points out to voyagers the mouth of the narrow strait.

The convent, in a part of which he was confined, somewhat resembled that of St. George at Balaclava. It consisted of long ranges of two-storied buildings, with corridors off which the cells opened, and at the extremity of these, overhanging the sea, was a chapel, with a cupola cut in the form of a pine-apple, surmounted with a slender gilded cross, beneath which was a crescent, to symbolise the triumph of the former over the

latter—the emblem of the conquered Crimean Tartars.

Daily and nightly, as Julian lingered in the vaulted cell appropriated to his use as a prison, with a straw pallet, and billet of wood for a pillow, or as he trod listlessly to and fro in the court off which it opened, he could hear the singing in the choir. Though unaccompanied by music, much of it was very beautiful, and its pathos more than once deeply stirred the heart of the unfortunate listener, though the language was utterly unknown to him, being the old Russian or Slavonian, instead of modern Greek.

Cliffs and watchful eyes rendered all hope of escape futile to the seaward; moreover, the battery, perched high in air, would effectually prevent any British or French ship from coming near the coast; yet daily he could see the white sails of passing vessels shining against the blue horizon. To the landward, all was hostile country, inhabited by those to whom his very costume, complexion, and language marked him as an enemy.

Winter was past and spring at hand, and now he began to look earnestly and yearn-

ingly over the landscape that stretched away, as he knew, towards Kinbourn, but how distant that fortress might be he knew not. Charmingly was the view diversified by budding woods and grassy meadows, where large herds of cattle browsed, and where the curling wreaths of grey smoke ascended from picturesque-looking Tartar villages.

Ten miles distant to the east lay—generally half hidden in haze, the exhalations of its salt lakes—the town of Perecop, on the flat and grassy isthmus called by the Tartars *Or-kapi*, or “the gate”—a gate which if the Allies had chosen to *close* with their bayonets, instead of fighting or bombarding Sebastopol, would have ended the war speedily enough.

Apart from his breathless, hopeless desire to escape—for he had long since abandoned all expectation of the parole accorded to an officer—Julian found one source of interest in his present abode—a lady of rare and remarkable beauty, who appeared from time to time among the nuns, and yet seemed to be neither an *interne* nor *externe* of their order. It was she whom he had seen hovering, lamp in hand, and regarding him with sincere commis-

seration, in the cold and dreary corridor, on the night of his first arrival.

Classic in profile and clearly cut, pure in their expression, and pure in complexion and grave placidity, her features were quite unlike any he had ever seen before. Her manner and bearing were stately, the latter displaying a certain indescribable grace. Her dress was always dark, and her eyes, her hair, and well-defined eyebrows were all intensely black, denoting a foreign origin; yet, when she addressed Julian one day, she made his heart bound, as she did so in perfect English, saying:

"I am sorry to see you still a prisoner here."

"And I am likely to remain so, madam," replied Julian, with a profound bow; "it is the pleasure of Mouravieff."

As he spoke, she regarded him with a strangely eager gaze, as if his face interested her, or recalled, as perhaps it did, dark though it was, another.

"Have you the misfortune to be a prisoner too, madam?"

"No; not even Mouravieff dare attempt to

make me that," she replied, with the slightest approach to a curl on her lip.

"Are you English?" asked Julian, eagerly.

"No."

"Russian, then? I have heard you speaking Russian."

"Yet I am not one; and who I am matters nothing to anyone; but you remind me strangely of a friend I once had—even your voice is the same."

"Perhaps," said Julian, with indifference, for his mind was full of his own affairs; yet he added, "Who may this friend have been?"

"I cannot say; I have known so many—so many," she replied, ponderingly, as she passed a white hand across her broad, low forehead, above which her thick, dark hair was simply braided.

"I can perceive that the conversation" (he did not like to call it attentions) "of this man—this Mouravieff—annoys you."

"Oh, not at all."

"Why, if you dislike him, as I see you do?"

"I have long since learned to take annoyances easily."

"Don't you fear him?" asked Julian, after a pause.

"Fear him?" She almost laughed, and then added, "But I greatly fear he means you some deadly wrong."

"If his open threats are to be believed, he does."

"What chance have you of release?"

"None! Why am I left so completely at the mercy of a wretch like this? Is there indeed a Providence?" exclaimed Julian, in his bitterness of heart.

"What do you mean?"

"Or—God forgive me—are all things chance?" he added, colouring at the impiety into which passion lured him.

"There is a Providence," she replied, in her grave, earnest way, and with her pathetic tone, "and all things are *not* chance. Are we not told that there is a special Providence even in the fall of a sparrow? Take courage! I have little power here, but I may watch over you, and, by dissembling, find out the real intentions of Mouravieff, and shall aid you if I can."

Julian bowed his face over her hand and

kissed it; but she withdrew it, and retired in haste, as Mouravieff at that moment passed through the court and saw the action. Julian felt his heart thrill, for so perfectly was he aware of the man's character that he half expected to be cut down by his sabre; but so sudden an ending of his troubles was not then the intention of the Muscovite, who barely gave him a glance, and passed on.

From that hour, however, Julian found his little daily liberty sorely abridged, his promenade being restricted to a species of cloister, the open arches of which faced and overhung the sea, closed by a wall at one end, an iron gate at the other, and overlooked by a grey-coated and flat-capped sentinel in the adjacent gun-battery.

Thus he feared that the only friend he had was lost to him; but there was a wonderful individuality about her, in voice, manner, and action, that, apart from the rare character of her beauty, frequently occupied his thoughts. Lost in these, a day or two after, he was intently gazing on the vast expanse of sea that stretched away towards Cape Caramoun, the most western headland of the Crimea,

when an old Greek priest, in passing along the corridor, patted him kindly on the shoulder.

Julian started, and, in saluting him courteously, recognised, in him, the same pastor who had partially sought to afford him protection from Mouravieff in the traktir or tea-house. He wore a long, dark brown cassock, with a square-shaped cap of the same stuff and colour; from under the latter his silver hair hung plaited in two tails over his shoulders.

In French he condoled with Julian on the unmerited treatment he was receiving; but could hold out no hope of any amelioration, as the *pulkovnik* of the Jakoutsk Regiment was one who loathed the English personally and collectively, "and was, in himself, a *mauvais sujet*."

Julian then ventured to inquire who the remarkable lady was, that promised to befriend him, yet seemed failing to do so.

"Heaven only knows who she is—we do not!"

"Or her nationality?"

"She has none, nor religion either, I fear,"

replied the priest, shaking his silver beard, which flowed all over the breast of his brown cassock.

“She seems sad, as one who has known some great sorrow?”

“Sad! I should think so. In three weeks here she has been rarely seen to smile—laugh, never.”

“How is she named?”

“That I cannot tell you; I only know that she is always quiet, gentle, and subdued—ever kind, good, and prayerful, though to what or to whom she prays is known to herself alone. Her reserve is extreme; she is ever gracious, but never communicative as from whence she has come, or whither she is going. We believe that she is a pilgrim of some kind, and will soon be gone from this.”

“Poor thing!”

“We suppose her to be one of high rank, who, in her time, has seen much grief and trouble; or that some rash act or mysterious deed of her own has brought her to sorrow, and haunts her memory. Prettiness is common enough everywhere, but beauty such

as hers is uncommon in its degree, and it certainly seems to have bewildered Ivan Mouravieff. But helpless, apparently, and a waif though she seems to be, he is compelled to respect her, as she bears a special protection from Innocent, the Archbishop of Odessa."

This was the same prelate who, in his sermon to the garrison of Sebastopol, foretold the *fourth* appearance in the air of St. Sergius, to give them them victory at the Alma, where his holy image, borne by the Kazan column, was so nearly captured by the Highland Brigade.

"Nothing," says a writer, "can be so hurtful to a man's welfare, or so destructive of his energy and force of character, as the belief that he has no power over his own destiny, and that, do what he may, he cannot alter, in the slightest degree, the ordained course of events." Julian recalled the time of blind and reckless carelessness, when he had actually courted death, face to face and foot to foot with the foe—when the last solemn tragedy of life was of no more interest than the snapping of a musket!—going forth

to the horrible trenches, heedless whether he might perish there, as so many did, by cold or the bullet; but *now* he had no desire to die, or find the dark and miserable end that the spiteful and dastardly Mouravieff designed for him; for now he had begun to taste the sweets of success, while the awakening of dormant ambition, that had been gratified, had led him to hope for brighter, better, and greater things.

Existence was hard to resign now that it had been becoming so well worth having.

Why was Fate so inexorably hard to him? thought Julian. He could not tax his memory with having ever done a wilful wrong to man or woman. Many a time had it been done to him since the hour of his birth—since silence and mystery hung over the name of his mother—and he had even forgotten or forgiven the offenders; and now there stole into his mind a bitter pang in the idea that life was a failure, that he was treated with injustice by destiny, by leaving him so hopelessly and utterly at the mercy of this unjust and reckless tyrant—this self-made enemy—Ivan Mouravieff!

Surely he might achieve some means of communication with the outer world ere it was too late—ere he was too far on that terrible journey to some Russian fortress, a fate the end of which Heaven alone could foresee !

If not, he was inevitably lost for ever, and must abandon all hope ! Better cast himself headlong on the bayonets of the Jakoutsch Tartars, or on the spears of the Cossacks. His life had been a sad and short one, one of wrong since his birth—he was barely four-and-twenty now—and it was hard, hard, to die, and unavenged !

And amid these corroding thoughts, the refined face of Julian began to look worn and thin.

CHAPTER XIII.

JULIAN'S VISITOR.

JULIAN saw the old priest no more, save once, when more imminent peril menaced him, and death seemed close indeed, for a clergyman though he was, and not naturally of an unkind disposition, in his genuine hatred of "the island curs, whose soldiers were sailors," and whom all the ladies of Sebastopol and Bagtche Serai came forth in their carriages to see *beaten* at the Alma, he was in the main, perhaps, tolerably indifferent as to what became of Mouravieff's prisoner; yet he was not so ungracious as to decline the arrangement of an interview between the latter and the strange lady who had promised to befriend him.

Thus, one evening when the setting sun was reddening the waters of the Bay of Perecop, and Julian, from the guarded cloister, was watching a distant white sail

that seemed to hover like a tiny sea-bird on the horizon, he suddenly found her by his side. So full was he of thought, and so softly had she entered, that he had not heard her approach.

"Ah—you have not forgotten me!" he exclaimed, as hope began to brighten in his heart, and she placed her hand in his.

"You see that I have not," she replied, with her grave, sweet expression of eye and tone of voice; "yet in this peculiar place, where I am but the guest of a sister whom I befriended in time past, I am hemmed in by difficulties, and to seem to befriend you, even to speak of you, serves but to excite the anger of the Pulkovnik Mouravieff, who, but for the troubles that menace himself and his force, would have sent you hence long ago. Even now, I have only contrived to come hither, as in consequence of some alarm concerning British gunboats, he has ridden along the coast with his field-pieces."

"Have I then a hope of escape?"

"Not as yet—nor can I see my way," she replied sadly; "but, of this I am aware, that inquiries have been made concerning you."

"By whom?" asked Julian, eagerly.

"The officer commanding at Kinbourn. The fact of your being alive and *known* to be in his hands seems to trouble Mouravieff; thus I heard him say to Saronovitch, that rather than give you up, he will have you flung over these rocks, and, if necessary, assert that you perished in the act of escaping."

Julian's blood alternately boiled and curdled.

"These are surely but wild words and idle threats," said Julian. "Who would perform such an atrocity?"

"For a rouble or two—a copper kopek, more or less—you don't know of what his Cossacks are capable."

Instinct made Julian glance wildly all about him; but guarded and enclosed as he was on every side, escape seemed hopeless, and the sound of the sea, chafing on the rocks, far down below, like the echo of her terrible words, chilled his blood.

"I can but die once," said Julian, after a pause, in a voice that seemed half hushed by desperation, "and must die some time, but

surely Heaven will make me some reparation, if I perish thus ! ”

“ I hope so. ”

“ We shall all get there in time, perhaps, ” said he, with a kind of bitter coolness, inspired by the strange calmness of her manner ; for she betrayed little or no natural emotion at the terrible tidings of which she seemed to have constituted herself bearer. “ Yes, it may be, all may reach the great white throne—Russian and Briton ; Christian and —— ”

“ All ? ” she exclaimed, with a strange expression of eye and tone of voice.

“ Well, even such devils as this Mouravieff, if he repent. But why would he destroy me thus in cold blood ? ” asked Julian, after one of those pauses which were filled up by terrible and painful thoughts ; “ he spoke to me of Siberia—or a fortress ; I would rather go to the former. ”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because then I should never be without the chance of an escape, and making my story known to the world. ”

“ Escape ! Better die by your own hand than become the life-long prisoner such as

Mouravieff, by writing a simple letter, can make you. Escape! you know not what you say, or the lives of those unfortunate exiles, as I have seen them."

"Where?"

"In the land of eternal snow, and on the banks of the sluggish Lena, in the wild and dreary plains that lie northward of Jakoutsk—the land from whence this very Mouravieff comes. There, once or twice yearly, a crowd of worn-out prisoners arrive escorted by Cossacks. Under the whips and lances of these, or by toil, privation, and despair, many have perished by the way, and been left to feed the wolf and the raven; and the survivors, nearly dead with sorrow, are sent into the pine forests as slaves, or into the mines, where they never see the blessed sun, but work and sleep—sleep and work, digging for quicksilver under the watchful eyes and sharp lashes of relentless taskmasters; and when worn with toil, are only permitted to repose in rock-hewn recesses, dark as the grave, filthy as dog-kennels, and into which they must creep on their hands and knees. Soon they become gaunt as skeletons; their

hair and eyebrows drop off; their teeth fall out; their joints are racked with pains beyond your conception, because they are produced by the effects of the quicksilver. Some of these have been, and some are still, those who were the noblest, fairest, and bravest of Poland! Compared with them, those in the forests are happy; but what happiness! Observe one—who he is, or was, no one knows—years upon years ago he came hither in a covered *kabitka*. A smile is never seen on his face; his hair has long since grown grey. His look is restless and gloomy; he is always timid, crushed, and silent,” she continued, almost in the words of Ryeleieff the exile; “he wanders about like one demented, and scowls on all; but ever and anon he will stretch his hand to the west when he sees the setting sun, and weep the tears of hopeless and insupportable anguish! Oh, better death than such fate as that.”

“And you have beheld all this?” said Julian, who felt impressed by her manner and thrilled by a strange cord in her sweetly modulated voice.

"I have beheld so much in many lands that nothing can appal—nothing terrify me now."

Julian regarded her with an interest that bordered on bewilderment. Who or what was she—of what nation (for her refined beauty belonged to none in particular), and of what rank? Had she been a Siberian exile?

That she was a lady in bearing and education it was impossible to doubt, though her unstudied gravity seemed almost eccentric; and that her beauty was strange in its character, as high in its degree, his sense of admiration fully proved.

Her creamy skin seemed transparent; her eyes wondrously dark yet bright; her whole countenance was etherealised in expression, with an ever present calm about it, as if all that was of the earth, earthy, had passed away, and nothing remained but the Divine spirit.

"Are you a native Greek?" he ventured to inquire.

"No—learn that I am a wanderer—of no country."

"Ah! whom war has made homeless?"

"True; war with heaven as well as earth," was the strange reply she gave; and Julian began to think her mind unhinged.

"Surely you bear a heavy cross?" said he, kindly.

"I do—a heavy one indeed!" she replied, with the nearest approach to emotion he had yet been able to detect in her.

"And you think it came to you from Heaven?"

"Nay, it was of my own seeking, and must be borne by me, even unto the end."

"Pardon me if I have recalled griefs."

"I came not here to speak of them, or of myself, but of you, and to aid you if I can. I do not believe, with all his lust of cruelty, that Mouravieff would commit the sudden atrocity he threatened, when he had the alternative of a lingering punishment for you in Siberia; but we cannot trust him—the man by nature and impulse is a savage. You spoke with apparent resignation of dying—you so young! Have you no friend in the world, for whose sake you would wish to escape the unforeseen toils that surround you?"

"I have my comrades, and, more than all, my dear, dear brother!" exclaimed Julian, in a voice that grew tremulous, while his eyes became moist.

"Your brother Gerard?" said she, calmly, and without any tone of surprise.

"Know you Gerard?" he asked, in boundless astonishment.

"I met him——"

"When—where?" he asked again, impetuously.

"In Germany, and here I soon became certain that you were the Julian of whom he spoke to me so often, in tones of brotherly affection.

"How, madam—how?"

"By your voice, action, and manner; even by your features, though your eyes and hair are dark, and his eyes are light, and his hair golden and crispy. You see my description is correct."

"And where now is Gerard—you can tell me, perhaps?" asked Julian, trembling with anxiety and affection.

"I cannot—I know not; I have been able," she added, dreamily, as if with her

eyes fixed on a far horizon, "to divine many things, but I cannot tell you that."

"And you saw him last where, madam?"

"At Wiesbaden."

"True; he went there, poor dear Gerard!"

"And there I left him, having to set out hurriedly on a long and devious journey, which, all unforeseen by me, has ended here—indeed, only to begin again."

"Your name; may I ask it, madam?"

"Salome."

Where had Julian heard that peculiar name, which did not sound quite unfamiliar to him; but in the late and present perturbation of his spirits, he had forgotten all about the heroine of Gerard's luckless romance.

So it was, indeed, she of whom the Jewish Rabbi, Dr. Ben Ascher, at the Michelsberg, had told that incredible history to Gerard. Julian was ignorant of it, but he was not insensible to her wonderful beauty; yet it failed to affect or impress him as it had done the more nervous enthusiast and dreamer Gerard. He had seen and knew infinitely less of this fair stranger than the latter, yet the idea occurred to his more practical mind, with refer-

ence to her deep and lustrous, yet quiet and dreamy eye, that she must be an opium eater, like De Quincey, Coleridge, and others. This might account for her apparently isolated existence, and the strange world of dreams—a world of her own—filled with visions and references to the past, in which she seemed to dwell.

This sudden conviction gave Julian somewhat of a shock, and quelled his half-kindled hope. If she were a dreamer, and thus thoroughly unpractical, instead of enabling him to escape the fate that was intended for him, she might precipitate it. Then he remembered that, though Mouravieff had certainly threatened him with Siberia, he had said nothing about assassination, and he began to think her story might be an opium-derived fancy.

“ You doubt me, in some way ? ” said she, suddenly, after watching the expression of his face.

Julian coloured.

“ Pardon me, madam,” said he, surprised by her strange acuteness ; “ I did but doubt, for a moment, whether Mouravieff is capable of committing the deed you warned me of.”

“ You know not of what he is capable. He became colonel of the Jakoutsk Regiment by putting his predecessor out of the world.”

“ By assassination ? ”

“ By giving him a poisoned salve to apply to his wounds received at Alma. He was recovering fast ; but three days after the friendly present of Ivan Mouravieff, then his *chef-de-bataillon*, his blood became a mass of corruption, and the poor man died in excruciating agony. But the wretch we speak of has returned—farewell, I must leave you.”

As she spoke she hastened away, and Julian knew, by the sharp call of a trumpet, the clanging of hoofs, and rumbling clatter of artillery wheels, waking the echoes of the cloisters and courts of the convent, that Mouravieff had returned from his coast reconnaissance to Kaldantin.

By this time the sun had sunk behind the hills of the Crimea, and a dark blue tint had overspread the sea. Ere his morning rays were again to brighten the latter much was to happen that Julian, when conducted back to his cell, could little foresee.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BEAR IN LOVE.

WERE this more a novel and less a narrative of true events, we might dilate at greater length on many things than we do, particularly the strange character of Salome. Suffice it to say that she proved as great a puzzle to Ivan Mouravieff as to Julian.

When that ferocious commander had left his field battery, tossed the bridle of his horse to a Cossack orderly, and was entering the (otherwise unused) part of the convent, in which, *sans cérémonie*, he had established his headquarters, as there was no place in the Tartar village close by suitable for his habitation, he met Salome, and proceeded to follow her at once into the garden, whither she was proceeding especially to avoid him.

The purity of her Russian perplexed him ; yet she was not a native, he knew, and she did not wear the red sarafan, then affected by all

patriotic Russian ladies, but was clad habitually in black or other sombre colours.

Her beauty dazzled him and inflamed his passions, but while her apparent loneliness and isolation encouraged him on one hand to press his suit boldly, her perfect coolness and confidence, together with something of undisguised contempt, repressed him on the other, while they irritated and surprised him ; hence his mode of conducting his love affair was somewhat remarkable.

He saluted an *eikon*, one of the many that stood in the garden walks, and then saluting her, presented his ungloved hand, which she affected not to see, and was deliberately turning away with a mere bow, when he confronted her, and laid a grasp, but a gentle one, on her arm, for he was agitated—the bear in love had actually become gentle, but she drew back with an air that showed she shrunk from his touch.

“Listen to me, madam,” said he ; “I would speak with you.”

“What can you have to say to me ?” she asked in a low, quiet voice, while her dark eyes looked fully and unshrinkingly into his,

and she quietly fanned herself with a circular fan of black feathers.

"Much—oh so much," said he, tugging his coarse moustache.

"So much, Pulkovnik,—yet we are almost strangers?"

"Surely not such strangers now; but I have that to say which—if heard by you with favour—may alter the whole tenor of your life and mine."

"Scarcely either, I fear," said she, with a slight curl on her lovely lips, for she seemed too unemotional to exhibit much feeling of any kind; "but I suppose I may anticipate what you have to say—that you love me?"

"Yes," said he, surprised to find her taking, in her unmoved way, the initiative.

"Then you may as well seek to woo the moon, or the passing wind."

"After all I have said, and offered to do for you, even to lay my life itself, if you wished it, at your feet, this reply is cruel!"

"Your words are idle; I wish neither your life nor your love."

He eyed her gloomily, for anger grew side by side with his passion, which really had

nothing of real love in it, and then he said curtly and bluntly :

“ I do not see why I should not arrest you as an English spy ! ”

“ Why and wherefore, Pulkovnik ? ”

“ You speak English so well.”

“ So do you—thus the less we talk of spies and spying the better. Moreover, I speak Russian with equal facility.”

“ Yet you are not a Russian,” said he, his black beady eyes beginning to sparkle malevolently, while the scar on his cheek became livid, as it often did when he was excited. “ Nor a Pole either.”

“ What am I ? ”

“ Either a prude or a coquette—one at all events who seems to take a delight in torturing the hearts of those who see you, and in seeing you, love you.”

“ We have had enough of this ; permit me to pass, Pulkovnik ? ”

“ Patience yet awhile, and pardon my bluntness, for I am but a blunt soldier, and all unused to speak with one like you, that might grace a crown ; but with your talents, your beauty, and keen power of observation,

what a *diplomatiste* you would make, how invaluable as the wife of a courtier! Grave, earnest, sensible, and most adorably beautiful," he continued, laying a hand again upon her soft arm, "you are altogether unlike the generally shallow minds one meets with in the conventional society of cities."

"Well?" said she wearily.

"Hence I have learned to love you dearly and passionately, with a regard based on the purest admiration. Do give me some little hope, Salome, dearest Salome!"

She heard him quite unmoved, though the man's breast heaved, his voice trembled, and his eyes expressed certainly as much passion as his coarse Kalmuck nature was capable of; but no hectic of red, and no greater whiteness, came into the bright—yet in many ways impassible—face of the woman. All emotion had evidently long since been over for her.

"To what end, or with what view, do you tell me all this?"

"Can you ask me? To give me your hand in marriage, Salome."

" 'Those who wed once wail always,' says

your Russian proverb. You actually ask me to marry you ? ”

“ Yes,” said he, perplexed by her perfect coolness.

“ You know not what you say, or to whom you say it,” she replied in her gentle voice, and without either the slightest accent of anger or annoyance ; “ you are a man whom I fear few women could love, and I, for one, do not even respect you.”

“ You cannot respect the Colonel of the Jakoutsk Regiment, one who has reached the fifth *tchin* of hereditary nobility ? In the name of Heaven and St. Sergius, what can you respect ? ” asked Mouravieff, more in astonishment than anger.

“ Pardon me if I am rude, but I must leave you.”

“ One word yet, Salome,” said he humbly ; “ my rank and income—more than all, my prospects under our father the Emperor—will surely satisfy you and your relatives ? ”

She gave him a shuddering glance, but made no reply.

“ You have some relatives, I suppose ? ” he continued.

"Most people have."

"And you?"

"I have none," she replied, looking upward with that air which was peculiar to her, as of one who looked beyond earth for compassion and sympathy, and firmly believed herself to be the most unhappy being in existence.

"None?" said Mouravieff, after a pause.

"Not one human being in all the world claims kith or kin with me," she replied with intense sadness.

"All the better—then I shall be all the world to you!" he exclaimed, rather encouraged to proceed by this declaration of utter unfriendedness, till a sudden idea seized him, and he said, "Perhaps you are married already? But, no, no," he added, taking her shapely white hand in his; "you have no marriage-ring!"

"I am not married," she replied meekly.

"Engaged—betrothed, perhaps?"

"Nor one, nor other, though they are the same thing."

"Then why—why may you not be mine?" said he, caressingly, and in a low voice, as he

bent over her. "Oh, Salome, if the adoration of a life ——"

"Such as yours?"

"Yes, Salome."

"Poor fool! You weary me."

"This is too much!" he exclaimed, as the gloomy expression came into his eyes, and he stepped back a pace, with his head erect. "How unseemly to talk thus to one who would peril existence to please you!"

"You might please me, Mouravieff, by a smaller hazard. You have in your hands a British prisoner—a mere youth; set him free, and restore him to his countrymen."

He started as she spoke, and eyed her keenly.

"If I set free this fellow, in whom you seem to take—why, I know not—an interest, will you try at least to love me?"

"No—not even then."

"Have you seen him, or spoken with him?"

"Question me not in that tone."

"If I thought so—if I thought so!" he muttered, as a sudden pang of jealousy wrung his heart.

"I know you have some cruel and dreadful views concerning him, but I beseech you to abandon them, and think of the gratification the act of doing so will afford you, Mouravieff, when your last hour comes, as come it must."

"Bah! when that hour comes, Salome, I shall turn monk and cheat the devil."

"As Ivan the Terrible thought to do, by dying in a cowl?"

"Yes—precisely."

"You pretend to love me, and yet delay in according me this request—an act of simple mercy," she urged, plaintively.

"You shall be gratified—he shall leave his prison this very night."

"You promise me, Mouravieff," she asked, with her soft, sad smile.

"I swear it!"

His eyes glared as he spoke with hoarse earnestness, but, notwithstanding the promise, *she* could read his secret soul, and knew that the release he intended would be a final and fatal one for the unhappy Julian. Yet she said, in her usual calm way:

"When will you set him free?"

"About midnight."

"Why so strange a time?"

"I should not wish Saronovitch to know that I set free a prisoner of war. You seem interested in him, Salome."

"Deeply."

"I had begun to think you incapable of feeling deeply on any subject."

"I mean that I am interested in him as much as aught of mankind on earth can interest me."

"Adieu, then, for the present, Salome. This gratification shall be afforded you. I have given you my promise."

The bow she gave him was addressed to her fan rather than to him.

He raised his hand to the peak of his glazed helmet, according her a salute that was more formal than loving, jerked his sword under his arm, and strode away, with his breast suddenly inflamed by the most unmeaning jealousy, and resolved that while he pretended to accede to her wish on the one hand, he would secure his own dire vengeance on the other.

He believed that she and Julian must have

met elsewhere than at Kaldantin, else why did she reply so firmly, "Question me not"? When, where, or how often they had met, mattered nothing to him now. He could take but sure means to prevent them ever meeting again. Julian would simply disappear, and his place be found vacant in the morning.

The story would spread that he had escaped, and that a party of Cossacks had gone forth to scour the roads; these tidings would, of course, reach Salome, and confirm her in the idea that he had acceded to her wish.

Salome gazed after this new lover of hers as he withdrew; an inscrutable expression stole into her quiet, dark eyes, and then a smile that bordered on something of triumph—an unusual smile for her—spread over her pallid yet beautiful face, as it turned appealingly up to heaven.

The sun set; its last rays faded out on the slender gilt cross and cupola of the little church upon the headland. Darkness stole over the sea and land, and the moon as it rose cast the shadow of Cape Kaldantin far into the Gulf of Perecop; but it shortened, or receded,

as the queen of night ascended high through the fast-flying fleecy clouds.

Vespers were over in the convent church ; Mouravieff, after duly performing his devotions there, spent the remainder of the night in drunkenness with Saronovitch, the while looking forward impatiently to the time when all the inmates of the edifice, even to the quarter-guard, would be asleep, and none waking but his sentinel on the land side.

In the midst of his potations, and of that coarse, ribald conversation in which all Russians are prone to indulge, he paused only when he heard the last bell ring for prayer in the adjacent chapel, and then he turned to the *eikon* and crossed himself somewhat after the fashion of the truculent Louis XI., and resumed his beverage — Crimskoi wine, strongly laced with vodka.

Yet Mouravieff was careful to a degree in the arrangement of his collars, and the spotless brilliancy of his glazed boots, when time and service suited ; and was careful too, in the selection of the faintest and most evanescent of perfumes for his handkerchief.

From the sergeant of the guard he had

obtained the key of the place wherein Julian was placed at night, ostensibly to visit the prisoner, for whose pretended escape he actually meant—for the fuller acting out of his scheme—to punish publicly that luckless non-commissioned officer; and as midnight drew near and the whole edifice and all therein were sunk in silence, he set out on his infamous errand.

In his relentless, unmeaning, and unnatural rancour to Julian, who had never offended him, he did not require, in the least degree, the additional incentive of jealousy.

He was merely armed with a revolver pistol, and the small dagger, about four inches long, which many of the Russian officers were found to carry secretly in the Crimea; but he was accompanied by two Calmucks, carrying ropes, and one of these had a drumstick and piece of whipcord, wherewith to gag the mouth of their intended victim and stifle his cries. The other had a lantern, the light of which could be concealed at pleasure.

These Calmucks were both soldiers of the Jakoutsk Regiment, and men on whose faith,

obedience, and silence he could implicitly rely. The countenances of both were extremely forbidding; they had large heads, round faces, dark olive complexions, high cheek-bones, enormous ears, small black eyes, widely apart, and broad noses that scarcely rose above the level of the face, having, in short, all the peculiarities which distinguish the Calmucks from other nomad nations of Asia, with forms that were almost colossal, and exhibiting, in muscular development, the most herculean strength.

They were but one degree above savages, and when summoned by their worthy pulkownik, were actually finishing a supper of raw horseflesh, tearing it from the bones which they held in their hands.

Instead of taking the trouble he was about to do in the disposal of his victim, by binding and throwing him into the sea, he might simply have had him shot; but that did not suit his purpose, and, as yet, he had no men to spare to escort him beyond Perecop.

He soon reached the place of confinement, which was simply a species of cell or dormi-

tory adjoining the open cloister where Julian had his daily promenade, and unlocking the door, entered it.

In hot haste he flashed the light of the lantern round its bare walls; but the place was empty, and the prisoner—*gone!*

He panted with mingled astonishment and rage; he could not believe his eyes, and turned the light of the lantern round the place again and again. It glared on the jointed masonry; it shed its fitful gleam on the repellent visages of the Calmucks—on the Cossack pallet of worn felt, with a bag of straw for a pillow, which had formed the couch of the prisoner, of whom not a vestige remained but his tattered scarlet uniform.

He had escaped—but how?

Mouravieff never paused to think, and in his baffled rage and spite forgot all about the part he had intended to act upon the morrow, and his pretended accordance to the desire of Salome; and he had but one thought—to recapture his victim.

To punish the sergeant of the guard he found barely possible, as he had soon convincing proof that the key of the dormitory

had never been out of the man's possession till he personally asked for it, and that it hung upon a nail in view of all the soldiers ; but he lost no time in taking vigorous measures.

From the battery he fired two heavy guns, burned blue lights, and sent up rockets to alarm the country. He also despatched some twenty Cossacks or more, with orders to scour all the roads for the distance of twenty miles, as far even as the head of the Sivash, or mud sea, with orders to shoot "the island cur," if he offered the least resistance on being recaptured.

Let those who may deem the brutality of Ivan Mouravieff's character overdrawn merely bethink them of the atrocities of which the Russian troops, officers and men alike, were guilty from first to last in the Russo-Turkish war, and those nameless horrors with which the public prints of Europe teemed, till the nearly unvaried repetition of them sickened, while they palled upon, the reader ; when again, as in the days of which Byron wrote,

" All that the mind would shrink from of excesses ;
All that the body perpetrates of bad ;

All that we read, hear, dream of man's distresses ;
All that the Devil would do if run stark mad ;
All that defies the worst which pen expresses ;
All by which hell is peopled or is sad,"

were daily shown to the world by these fierce
Muscovites, when animated by an insatiable
thirst for plunder, and maddened by victory.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE WATERS OF THE EUXINE.

PRIOR to some of the preceding events taking place, the *Flower of the Forest* had been ploughing the waves of the Euxine, of old known as the “Inhospitable sea”—Black only in name, for when thick fogs do not obscure it, nowhere is the sky so clear or serene; but its coasts always appear gloomy, owing to the quantity of wood and forest that covers them.

The shallows which ever and anon occur, and are seldom, if ever, marked in any chart, put the seamanship of old Bob Rowlock to the severest proof, and his foreknowledge of the destructive nature of the seaworm, which speedily gnaws its way through the thickest planking, made him warn the Earl that, if he wished to preserve his beautiful yacht, her sojourn in these waters should be as brief as possible.

About all this, there seemed, at times, to Gerard, to be an actual or singular unreality, that he should be there—*there* in the Black Sea, in the yacht of the Earl of Deloraine, leading a life of such unwonted ease and luxury, acknowledged as his son, and sailing in search of Julian, who, if living, could know nothing about all this state of affairs and sudden change of fortune.

The spring days were delightfully sunny and serene, and serene too were the starry nights upon the moonlit sea ; so now and then Bob Rowlock indulged his fancies by clearing away for action, casting loose the guns, getting up pikes and cutlasses, and making a terrible hubbub, to the terror of the Countess's maid, and Mr. Funnell, that most respectable and obese British butler, who thought the Earl mad to cruise in Russian waters, and whose slow, stolid temperament required leisure to grasp any new idea—and being beat up in his shirt at midnight to serve grog all round was certainly one. He regretted now that he had not "given notice" to his lordship in due time, and now would have to go through it all to the bitter end.

Amy Kerr could not reconcile herself to the idea that Julian would never be restored to them—to *her*—or that he was not safe, a mere prisoner of war, kept thus out of harm's way, and whom the coming peace would be certain to release.

Hope thus gave her an air of outward contentment, while the novelty of the voyage in these strange waters, which in some parts seemed to teem with transports and store-ships, British, French, Turkish, and Sardinian, afforded an occupation for her mind. Encouraged by the aspect of affairs, Sir Harry Drake became more tenderly attentive, and one day ventured to resume the thread of the old story.

Amy was far more attractive than many handsomer girls, so great was her play and animation of feature. On this day, Sir Harry thought she was looking her best; there was a species of sparkle in her clear, liquid eyes of dark blue, with their straight, dark, and well-defined brows; her cherry lips and beautiful teeth, and rippling, wavy brown hair, made up a charming whole.

As Sir Harry looked at her, he thought the

"odds should certainly be in his favour," for personally he was above the middle size, not yet thirty, had all the bearing of a man of fashion, was attractive in face and figure, and had now, again, all the easy and light-hearted manner of those with whom the world generally went well.

The Earl was having an afternoon nap in his cabin; Gerard and the young Countess were in another, no doubt talking on the subject of which he was never weary—Julian. Amy was seated on the cushioned bench beside the taffrail, when Sir Harry drew near her, and after a few preliminary observations, began to sound her views regarding him.

"I was singularly unfortunate at Constantinople, Miss Kerr," said he.

"How, Sir Harry?" asked Amy, looking not at him, but at the blue waves that were careering past in the sunshine.

"I mean in being the bearer of evil tidings to you all."

"We must have heard them eventually. Evil tidings they certainly were!"

"To you, I fear, especially; and to me,

perhaps," he added, on seeing her cheek redden.

"To you—how?"

"One is apt to dislike, perhaps unconsciously, those who bring them a cause for grief."

"But I could never dislike you, Sir Harry; indeed, I never positively disliked anyone."

"Could—could you but love me, Amy!" said he, in a low voice.

"Twice already—far, far from this—have I told you, Sir Harry, that I could not. I am very unfortunate, perhaps—the subject pains me—why recall it?" said Amy, still looking fixedly at the waves.

"Pardon me," he continued, humbly; "but it is hard to cease to hope, especially when with you, Amy, and after all I have undergone."

"You must not call me Amy."

"But Mr. Gerard does."

"Oh, that is very different; I have known him so long, and—and then——" she paused, and her colour deepened.

"What more?"

"He is Julian's brother," replied Amy, in her desperation or confusion, and blushing deeper at the admission.

"And hence may call you Amy?" continued Sir Harry, regarding her earnestly and with a look of pain.

There was a little pause, and Sir Harry's mind reverted to Balaclava and the episode of the handkerchief.

"Will you pardon me for what I am about to say?" he asked, in a low, soft voice.

"How can I do so, till I hear what it is?"

"A question that may pain you to answer, as much as it does me to put it."

"Then why conceive it?"

"To end the pain and anxiety I feel."

"And this question is ——"

"How long have you been engaged, Miss Kerr?"

"Engaged! Who? I? I never was engaged. Who told you so?" asked Amy, in genuine astonishment, an emotion in which Sir Harry began to share.

"Not engaged?" said he.

"Never!"

"Not to the missing Lord Hermitage?"

—for missing I still hope we may deem him.”

“No—oh, no!” replied Amy, with perfect candour; “but what can have made you think so?”

“A thousand circumstances and suspicions,” said Sir Harry, his heart beginning to brim over with pleasure and confidence again, though he felt a little bewildered at the same time.

“Now that we are on the subject, Miss Kerr, pardon one question more. Does Lord Hermitage love you? Why ask—I cannot doubt it!”

Under all the circumstances, there was something mortifying, almost irritating, in the question so unconsciously asked, and a shade clouded the girl’s soft, fair face, but she remained silent.

“He must—he could not fail to do so, if he ever saw you! I judge from the emotions of my own heart. But if aught—the worst, I mean—has happened, would that I could comfort you—as a brother might do—in some way.”

“You least of all!—you least of all!” was

the rather cruel reply, almost unconsciously given, to his somewhat blundering speech, while Amy fixed her tearful eyes on the horizon, where sky and ocean met. To Sir Harry she seemed incomprehensible. One fact stood clearly out in his mind—that she was *not* engaged. He had asked the same question of her that Mouravieff had asked of Salome; but the manner and tone of the frank and earnest young Englishman were very different from those of the wily and imperious Muscovite.

“I will intrude upon your confidence no more, Miss Kerr,” said he, “though I feel that this unrequited love of mine will pervert my whole nature.”

“I hope not—and do not say so; and now I must go below to the cabin,” said Amy, with a bow and a bright smile, as she left him; and, sooth to say, with all his love for her, his nature was too kind and jolly to be perverted. Amy, to do her justice, felt sorry for him indeed. Though in her heart she had no love for him, she could not but pity, respect, and thank him—yea, feel a deep interest in him—nothing more.

He sighed, selected from his case a soothing weed, and as he lit it to leeward, he thought, "She loves, or has loved another—that fellow with her handkerchief. Well, a second love is not worth having; it is only the ghost of what it should be; and yet—and yet—the girl is winning, so generous and—can't make it out, by Jove! I have been a fool to make myself so miserable about her, and poor Bertie used to tell me so. Shall I ever forget the letter I wrote her before Inker-mann? And what has it all come to now? She'll be certain to chuck herself at that fellow's head, now that he is heir to an earldom!"

But in this idea Sir Harry wronged Amy, as previous passages of our story serve to show.

"I am singularly unfortunate," said Sir Harry to the Countess, who now came on deck, and whom he partly made his *confidante*, for his old love had been greatly increased by the isolation and close intimacy enforced by a sea voyage. "She is not and never was engaged, she tells me, to Julian Melville, now Lord Hermitage. I don't know what to think, Lady Deloraine. Do you know if he

is or ever was engaged ? ” he asked, with his glass in his eye.

This was an especially awkward question to put to Kate with direct reference to Julian ; but, aware that he had long since forgotten all about the old days at Kingsmuir, so far as she was concerned, she said, stoutly enough :

“ He is not, so far as I know.”

“ It is all a deuced puzzle to me, and I begin to wish I was back at Balaclava—by Jove I do ! ” sighed Sir Harry, as he tossed his half-smoked cigar into the sea.

Colonel Kingsmuir, now a Major-General and Knight of the Order of Medjidie, was still at Kinbourn ; thus, though the party in the yacht were doubtless anxious to see the wonders of ruined Sebastopol, her course was steered north-east, as they were to receive him on board, and, moreover, it was from him, and in the neighbourhood of Kinbourn, that tidings of Julian were most likely to be found.

If not quite out of the way of civilisation, the worthy old soldier had been, for some time past, out of that of direct postal facilities.

He had been prepared to meet, somewhere in those regions, the party who were on board the Earl's yacht, when she came to anchor off Kinbourn Spit ; but he was by no means prepared for "the surprise" given him by his blooming Kate, when she, after rushing into his arms with tears of joy, told him *who* the prisoner was who had been reported "missing," or in Russian hands.

"There is magic in all this, Kate—beyond even our meeting here in the Crimea!" he exclaimed, after he had fairly taken the whole story in, and warmly welcomed Gerard, while, greatly to the Earl's contentment, he in no way adopted the *rôle* of Mrs. Kingsmuir at Malta.

The battered bastions of the grim Russian fortress, now garrisoned and guarded by the soldiers who had captured it ; the Zouaves and British troops acting as sentinels side by side ; the foreign shore, with all its Tartar villages and unusual scenery ; the war-ships anchored in the Bay and about Kinbourn Spit, were all objects of secondary interest compared with that which had brought the Earl's party so far up the Black Sea.

Kate hung on her father's breast again and again, and when she saw how bronzed he had become, how vast a silver beard he had cultivated, and how, like all the other officers she met, his uniform was faded, patched, and tattered, she felt happy to think she would take him straight home with her soon.

"Papa," she asked, "have you had any distinct news of Julian?"

Kingsmuir's countenance fell as she spoke, and when he replied, Gerard and Amy Kerr listened with anxious hearts, and even the sombre Earl could not help betraying some interest.

A Russian deserter, the Major-General stated, had come from Octchakov, soon after the capture of Kinbourn, to the British headquarters, with some information as to the whereabouts of Mouravieff's column, to attack which was impossible, as he added that 14,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry were encamped within a league of Octchakov, and that another column, 15,000 strong, was on the south side of Nicholaieff, in the fertile plain near the point of the junction of the Ingul and the Bug.

This man, when closely questioned, admitted that one prisoner had fallen alive into the hands of the Russians when attacking the reconnoitring column near Kherson ; but more he knew not.

On this, General Kingsmuir, full of anxiety for his young friend, got no less than three flags of truce sent, to arrange about an exchange for one of equal rank ; and he was thrice assured that Colonel Mouravieff had not a subaltern officer in his hands, but a private soldier, who, for special insolence to himself, would probably be imprisoned for life in a Russian fortress.

“ Julian must be dead then—he must have been killed during the conflict in the dark, and fallen unseen ! ” exclaimed Gerard, with a moan of anguish, for he and Julian had that in common between them, which none of those present ever had, or could have—the tie of blood and affection, rendered strong and tender by the great sorrows and humiliations of the past. “ My brother ! my brother ! ” he exclaimed. “ Oh, would that I—not you—had drawn the lot of death.”

Amy sat as if turned to stone. Gerard

covered his face with his hands and wept aloud. Kate stole her soft arm round his neck caressingly, and even the grim Earl, not unmoved by the scene, placed a hand kindly on the thick crispy curls of his fair head.

Lever says truly, "Despair of no man; there are touches of kindliness in natures the very roughest, that redeem whole lives of harshness."

CHAPTER XVI.

A FUTILE FLIGHT.

HAUNTED by the words of Salome, Julian —after regretting that he had not questioned her more about Gerard—began for the first time to think energetically about effecting an escape at all hazards; in attempting it, he could not be in greater peril than menaced him by lingering where he was.

All the celebrated desperate and daring escapes he had read of, in history and romance, crowded into his memory, but failed to afford him a hint on which to act. Yet he was in no Bastille or Chateau d'If; in no moated castle or dungeon deep in the earth; but in a simple dormitory or cell in a remote part of the convent.

By the fading light he examined the unplastered walls; their joints were massive, and the small window, thickly barred, was high up and near the ceiling; the door, of

Russian pine, he knew was thick and strong, hung on great iron hinges, and closed by a lock, the key of which was nightly taken away. He was without a single implement wherewith to pick the lime from the masonry, to attempt to remove or pick the lock, or make a passage through the door, which opened to a species of court, enclosed by a low wall, near which a sentinel was posted.

Again and again had he ere this surveyed the place of his nightly detention in all its details, and the conviction came home to his heart now that all idea of escape, unaided, was futile ; and he could but quietly, gloomily, and desperately await whatever was in store for him.

Julian had, in many ways, striven against misfortune and fate long enough now ; but he could not do it for ever, and he felt as if the power of further resistance was dying within him. All the dreams of the future, in which he had begun to indulge since his promotion in the service, were crushed now as completely as those past dreams and hopes that had been fostered by Gerard, of all that he would do and achieve, if he ever

won his birthright and became a peer of the realm.

If he were to die a sudden and barbarous death, he had a strange craving, a wild longing and desire, that, even after it, he might have the power to acquaint Gerard of his fate, and he actually prayed heaven that he might have this favour accorded to him, certain that if it were, as a spirit, he could find his brother wherever he might be. This strange sentiment or wish sprung perhaps from the common and certainly old Scottish superstition, that the murdered cannot rest in their graves, though the slain in battle may.

The daylight faded out, and then the rays of the moon shone coldly through the dingy panes of the grated window, throwing its outline obliquely on the bare wall of the dormitory for a time, until, as the moon rose higher, it faded out, and Julian was left in total darkness, to sit or lie as he chose upon the piece of felt, such as the Cossacks use, that formed his pallet.

The hours followed each other in monotonous succession, but Julian was too agitated

by terrible thoughts to sleep ; and amid them he felt his heart leap as a key was placed in the lock of the door, an unusual event in the night, and he thought his hour was come ! Every pulse throbbed and then seemed to stand still ; the perspiration started in cold beads on his temples, and he felt, even in the dark, that there was a wild glare in his eyes, as he sprang to his feet with the intention of rushing upon the first man who entered, and, by attempting at least to destroy him, anticipate his own doom.

Softly and stealthily the lock was turned—the door opened, and in the silvery moonlight, Julian saw only the grand figure and pale, beautiful face of Salome.

“I have come to save you,” said she, “and you have not a moment to lose, as I am certain that in another hour or less Mouravieff will be here.”

“I—I have no words to thank you,” said Julian in a breathless voice, and panting as he spoke, for the sudden change from the blackest despair and desperation to the new emotion her words excited almost paralysed him.

“Do not thank me, but act with speed and circumspection. I have discovered, or suspect with truth, what the intentions of Mouravieff are, and even I, who have seen so much of pestilence, war, and horror, shudder to think of them.”

“How got you the key from the guard?”

“I found *another* that fitted the lock—how, matters not—put on this dress and follow me—quick, quick, and delay not.”

She gave him the black fur cap, and short loose caftan and girdle, usually worn by the Cossacks of the Dneiper; he at once relinquished his tattered uniform, and with trembling hands assumed the proffered disguise.

“Heaven reward you, madam—Heaven reward you for all this; I may reach Kinnbourn unquestioned. But,” he added, “would that I had a weapon—there is a sentinel——”

“Weapons would not avail you here; noise or alarm are to be avoided,” said she in her calm, clear voice; “and while I speak to the soldier, do you pass on and use your utmost speed to leave this place behind you.”

He kissed her smooth white hand, which

seemed pale as that of an alabaster statue in the moonlight, and followed her into the court and from thence through a gate, close by which stood the tall figure of a Russian sentry, one of the Jakoutsk Regiment, with his flat forage cap and long grey capote, over which he wore his cross-belts of brown tanned leather. He was standing with his musket "ordered," and its fixed bayonet glittered in the moonlight as he turned sharply to see who were approaching his post.

"Pass on, nor pause, nor turn, when I speak to him," said she in a hurried and low voice.

As the black beady eyes of the Calmuck soldier fell upon him scrutinisingly, Julian felt his heart beating wildly, and it seemed as if a whole lifetime of fierce excitement were comprised in the vibrations of a pendulum; for if challenged or accosted by the sentinel, he knew not what to reply, and he was certain of being bayoneted if he stood still, or shot down if he fled.

The sentinel shouldered his musket, but ere he could speak, the hand of Salome was on his arm; her face in all its marvellous beauty was looking up to him, as she asked

him some question in Russian, and fascinated, as she well knew he would be, however savage his nature, by her soft voice, her feminine tenderness, and more than all by her pale loveliness, which the moonlight actually seemed to enhance, he forgot all about the Cossack peasant, whom he supposed to be her servant; and thus, without once looking back to where the great masses of the convent, with its cupolas and domes of copper or tin, gilded or painted green, and so Asiatic in aspect, stood up strongly defined in the flood of silver radiance, Julian took his way down a rocky path that led through a thicket of stunted pines, and the moment he was beyond range of the sentinel's eyes, betook him vigorously to flight.

He was to have bitter cause to remember that steep and rocky path by-and-by.

His whole object was to get as far away from that perilous vicinity as possible, and to achieve this he bent all his energies, and these were accelerated ere long by the double report of the battery guns, the blue lights that were burned, and the red rockets of alarm that were soaring high in the air when he looked

back and saw the convent of Kaldantin about three miles off.

And as he stumbled half-blindly on, he felt more fury than fear of Mouravieff gathering in his heart. Could he but cover that wretch for an instant with a pistol!

Oh, for the winged sandals of Mercury, that he could but reach Kinbourn, or put a few versts in as many minutes between himself and Kaldantin ere day dawned. Approaching sounds made him seek shelter amid the dense underwood of a thicket of caper and turpentine trees, and at that moment a couple of Cossacks, with their lances unslung, dashed past, pursuing the rough highway that led he knew not where, with their rough shaggy little horses at full speed.

Oppressed by excitement and all he had undergone, and fearing that he might be proceeding in a wrong direction, as he had only the vague idea that Kinbourn lay to the westward, he deemed it better to remain in concealment where he lay, and to wait till day dawned, and the first flush of the alarm and pursuit were over. He had no fear of wild animals, though unarmed, and luckily

knew nothing about the scorpions and the large black tarantula of the Crimea—a reptile of great size and fearful aspect.

The lights had died out at Kaldantin, and the intense silence around him restored confidence to the agitated breast of the fugitive ; and but for the recent sights and sounds, which announced that his flight had been discovered, he could scarcely have believed that he was free, actually free (though much that was perilous remained to be done), and that his heart, which half an hour before had been chilled by the prospect of a sudden and barbarous death, was now almost bounding with exultation and delight.

While lurking there, it seemed to Julian as if the last hours of the past evening, and of this night—the last he thought to spend on earth—were a hideous dream, the details of which were burned into his memory. There were the tinkling of the chapel bells under its copper cupola ; the vesper chanting of the Russian nuns ; the Russian drums in the village and battery below ; the striking of the great *kolokol* or bell of the covent.

He could remember that the sky, which had

brightened a little in the afternoon, had become dun and sombre in the west, when the sun was sinking behind the clouds ; that the air was unnaturally still, or he thought so, and the wind had died away ; the air had become mild, as the silver moon came out to throw the shadow of the window bars upon his prison wall, and not a sound was heard save the chafing of the almost tideless Black Sea on the rocks far down below, till he heard the key put in the lock, causing the hair of his head to bristle up ; and then there was the face of Salome, which came and went like a beautiful vision.

He saw and heard no more of the Cossacks for that night. The broad round disc of the silver moon, wading to all appearance through flying clouds that rolled before the currents of upper air like carded wool, flooded the landscape with light, and nothing seemed in shadow but the thicket where he lay ; and Julian, aware of all he might have to do and encounter on the morrow, strove to court a little sleep, but in vain ; and, judging by some of the stars, and the quarter where the moon shone, of the direction in which Kinbourn must lie,

he again set out on his way, at every pace looking watchfully around him, as he plodded over fields where flax and hemp, and even tobacco, would soon be growing.

He knew that his total ignorance of the language, and his complexion and features, by day, fatally precluded all chance of successfully passing himself off as a Cossack of the Dneiper; hence his ultimate hope of escape and safety lay in the avoidance of all natives until within reach of the British outposts; but how was he to exist for perhaps days without food; how was he to be guided to Kinbourn? And, on reaching it, he might find the fortress abandoned, and that Sir Houston Stewart's naval squadron had sailed to some other quarter.

At all these most natural and tormenting surmises he felt his heart begin to sink again.

The moon waned; the cold and dark hour of the morning came, and dawn stole in; the goldfinch, the tomtit, and the sparrow began to twitter about, and the lark and goshawk were soaring aloft as the sun rose over the salt lakes and marshes of Perecop.

Julian looked around him with a haggard eye. He could not recognise a single feature of the country; the way he was proceeding had *not* been that by which his Cossack escort brought him to Kaldantin, and he was painfully aware of the fact.

Shrinking for concealment into a clump of wild pear trees, he saw go past him a long line of those *kabitzkas*, or waggons, that are taken to Perecop for salt, where, in dry seasons, a plentiful supply may be had by simply driving them axle-deep into the shallow water, among which it lies in heaps like glittering sand.

Whatever was the scenery, or whatever were the features of the country, he knew that he could not be wrong in proceeding westward; but now he began to miss even the black bread and *quass* with which the Russian guard were wont to supply him, and though it was a land of teeming orchards and vineyards, at that season nothing eatable could be found but, perhaps, a half-decayed gourd or the wild garlic.

As the day drew on, the wanderer remained in his place of concealment; about the roots

of the trees, in a little dell, where he sat by the side of a running water, large numbers of crocuses and snowdrops were coming up, with other wild flowers.

The brawling runnel was a tributary of the Dneiper, and as Julian saw the speckled trout flashing over the brown pebbles among the shallows, and leaping up in the quiet, deep, dark pools, he thought of the Gala and Yarrow at home, in the dear mountain land that was so far, far away—and of happy hours spent beside them with Gerard and Amy and Kate—hours of laughter and innocent merriment.

“And now to make a little further way westward,” thought he, but again shrunk back; he heard the sound of hoofs and the jangle of a chain bridle, and first two and then three Cossacks passed at a leisurely pace, their horses, hardy as they were, to all appearance worn out by rough riding overnight; and Julian not unnaturally conceived that they were returning to Kaldantin, after a bootless pursuit, and he saw, moreover, that they were leisurely and wearily proceeding in an easterly direction.

Could he but reach the shore unseen and

make signals to some passing British ship ! But the hope of that was too wild and vague ; so scared had he been by the sudden apparition of the five obnoxious Cossacks, he could only lie *en perdu* where he was, and wait for the night once more.

To him it seemed as if the day, though a spring one, would never pass ; but the sun began to sink in the direction he meant to pursue almost ere he was aware of it, so deeply was Julian immersed in thought. Some limestone rocks that rose between him and the sea, a Tartar village in the distance, some beech-woods where the red deer found shelter, a bit of sandy plain where a flock of bustards could be seen amid the pale green juniper bushes, and the long line of a stony path that led between fields as his eye followed it, and bore towards Kinbourn, as he hoped, were all ablaze and aglitter with light as the sun sank down in its ruddy glory ; and Julian hoped prayerfully in his heart that the coming night might be one such as the last, for he had now a distinct idea of the path in which to steer his way, but most miserably was he disappointed.

The darkness seemed to come on sooner than usual, but there were neither moon nor stars visible; the whole sky, from the horizon to the zenith, was enveloped in dense masses of the most sombre cloud when Julian set forth on his lonely way; and ere long, to make the matter worse, there gradually came over the land a fog from the Black Sea, one of those opaque mists in which the obscurity is so thick that mariners are unable to see a cable's length from their vessels, and when the entrance to the Bosphorus becomes impracticable.

Still, all confusing and damping to the spirit as this event proved, Julian did not lose heart; he had under foot the beaten track, the stony path he had seen, and manfully and steadily he pursued it for several miles, and began to hope that at last he must be many miles distant from Kaldantin. If retaken, he could not fall into worse hands than those of Ivan Mouravieff; but there was the danger that his costume might cause him to be accused as a spy—a new and deadly peril, of which he had not hitherto thought, and what was called the “spy-fever” had been pretty prevalent in both armies during the war.

He occasionally passed a Tartar dwelling, with a courtyard and the usual wooden *porte-cochère*; but all the inmates were asleep, save, perhaps, a house-dog that barked, and hence made him quicken his footsteps.

The latter were becoming weary, faint, and slow now; but dawn was beginning to brighten through the mist, though not in the quarter where Julian expected to see it. He had just become conscious of this while ascending a rocky path, when he experienced a chilling shock on hearing a hoarse challenge in Russian from a sentinel who was unseen amid the grey vapour, but whose watchful ears had heard his footsteps. The challenge, which showed but too surely he was close to some Russian post, was followed by another, and by the rattle of the musket as it was brought from the "shoulder" to the "ready." Then followed the unmistakable sound of its being sharply cocked.

Julian felt his heart stand still; he scarcely dared to breathe, but softly made a detour to the left, avoiding the way he had been pursuing, and found himself among some trees, through which he gently and quietly pushed

his way, to put some distance between himself and the sentinel; and he deemed this shelter fortunate, for day was coming on fast now.

At last he left the thicket behind him, and was in an open grassy space; then suddenly the dense bank of grey fog drew off, passing upward like a curtain, and he found himself close to a huge edifice, having cupolas and domes of polished copper and gilded tin, and his heart seemed to die within his breast, while a groan escaped him, on finding that after all his toil, care, anxiety and peril, he was within a few yards of the convent-gate at —Kaldantin!

Language cannot convey all the poor fellow felt at this discovery; he felt ready to sink—“for the very best of our powers wear out when the soul’s burthen is continued long and long.” He had only postponed, not escaped, the final catastrophe; and he was surely abandoned to the Eumenides, those three terrible daughters of earth.

He had only time to perceive that it was not on that side of the edifice where Mouravieff had his quarter-guard with his sentinels; and

turning with a heart beating wildly, he was about to move off quickly, when he suddenly found himself confronted by the old Greek priest, who was, no doubt, at that early hour abroad on some religious function, and over his cassock wore a rough warm shouba of fur.

"Here again—here again—after all!" he exclaimed in French, as he recognised Julian, with something of alarm and much of commiseration in his face, for that of Julian bore equally the traces of hunger and despair.

"I lost my way in the mist," said he, hoarsely; "do you mean to betray me, *mon père*?"

"Far from me be the thought," said the old man, looking sharply round him to see whether they were observed; "but all this seems destiny—the destiny that points to death. Who can withstand God and the great Novgorod?" he added, using an old Muscovite proverb. "If you fall again into the hands of Mouravieff, not all the wealth of Ivan *Kaleta* will buy your life!"

He referred to the Grand Duke John, surnamed "the Purse," who always had a great one borne before with alms for the poor.

“ Your escape will, in all probability, cost poor Ivan Kutchko the sergeant, and Yury the sentinel, their lives ; not even the intercession of Salome will save them, and your recapture will avail them nothing ; but follow me quick—come this way.”

Leading Julian down a winding path cut in the rock on which the convent was founded, he, in a few minutes, conducted him into a cell, or chapel, hewn out of the limestone, exactly like the hundreds by which the valley of Inkermann is honeycombed, and hewn, doubtless, by the hands of the same race—the Arians of the Cheronesus, when persecuted by the Greek Church.

The walls and roof were all of the bare and living limestone rock, but clean and dry ; rock too formed the floor ; there was a large *eikon* or altar at one end, a font, a *prie-dieu* or two of pinewood varnished, some bearskins to kneel on, and a stair at the back communicating with some other cell or place (all at Inkermann were so connected), and it was lighted by a small glazed window, high up in the wall of rock.

“ *Mon ami,*” said the priest, still speaking

French, "this place is mine, and here you can remain in safety till we think what can be done for you, or with you. Our chief care must be to conceal your existence and close vicinity from Ivan Mouravieff."

And locking the door of the cell or chapel upon Julian, he took away the key. Crushed and bewildered, exhausted and worn, Julian threw himself on the bearskins that lay before the altar, and strove to think or to pray; but his mind was chaos—all!

If once retaken, Julian had not the most remote chance of escape, or even of being permitted to live in any capacity. Mouravieff knew right well how current in Britain and France were the stories of the butchery of the Allied wounded, and laughingly called it *mercy* to the foreign dogs; of the massacre of British seamen at Hango, and so forth; and he had, perhaps, no wish that the additional narrative of *his* captive should be given to the world.

The old Russian priest brought food and wine to the fainting prisoner. He did more, for he brought to him Salome, who, calm, steady, courageous, and unmoved, brought with her hope—hope that he might be saved after all.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE GULF OF PERECOP.

THE *Flower of the Forest* had now left Kibourn astern, and Amy and Gerard saw the flat grassy shores of that part of the Taurica Cheronesus sink into the sea with natural emotions of disappointment, for the great object of their visit had proved a futile one ; and all that General Kingsmuir, who had now joined the homeward-bound party on board, could urge—against his own conviction—that the new Commander-in-Chief at Sebastopol might have some tidings for them all, failed to raise the spirits of those in the cabin.

The long, flat Spit melted out of sight before the tall top-hammer of our shipping about it did.

So Amy and the Countess had actually been in the Crimea, and seen some of those Allied troops, with the fame of whose endurance and exploits all Europe was ringing

—our infantry, who had gone storming up the heights of Alma, and had lurked the livelong day in the rifle-pits potting the Ruskies in Sebastopol as coolly as one might do snipe in a bog ; and there, too, had they seen those bronzed and dark-bearded little Zouaves, who went swarming, with their wild, triumphant *cri-de-guerre*, through the yawning embrasures of the great Mamelon.

But all interest was merged in the missing Julian, whom all on board spoke of now as the Lord Hermitage ; and if no tidings reached them at Sebastopol, or no hope was held out there, all must be deemed over with him, and the conviction that he perished on the night of the skirmish must be accepted.

A son and heir promoted from the ranks ! “ Bad form—a deuced beginning ! ” thought the Earl, in his secret heart ; but General Kingsmuir was never tired of extolling his old friend Julian, whose conduct had met the approval of all, and won the notice of old Bosquet ; so, at least, there was considerable *éclat* about the affair.

Gerard had prepared him, in Park Lane, to swallow the then unwelcome pill, and now

he had but one leading thought—how to act gracefully in the matter ; all the more so that Julian's name had become—even in the Crimea, that land of strife and glory, where so many deeds of daring were done—a household word.

Kate and some others knew what the Earl, to do him justice, did not, and never would know, that much as he had in the past time wronged Julian, he had done more by robbing him, unconsciously, of the girl he first loved.

Whatever may be doing, or whoever may be dying, people must eat and drink, and dine ; and on board the *Flower of the Forest* the dinners were, as usual, perfect, from the *caviare* of sterlet roes, from the Don, to the Chartreuse ; the mock-turtle might be flavoured more or less by Mr. Funnell's heady Madeira, the sirloin be more or less underdone, and the *entrées* a little faulty, when the yacht was on a side-wind and careened well to leeward ; but the repasts were a perfection of which poor Julian, grovelling in his places of prison or concealment, knew nothing now, and had, perhaps, never known.

The yacht, under easy sail, was bearing through the Gulf of Perecop. Though in

Russian waters, the presence of the Allied fleets rendered the whole Black Sea as safe as the Medway, yet, when the weather was fine, old Bob Rowlock, with the Earl's permission, was fond, in the spirit of old times, of hoisting his colours and beating to quarters, and, we verily believe, would have liked something to fight with.

We have stated that no water was procurable at Kinbourn ; hence, as the tank of the yacht required to be replenished at a part of the coast which appeared solitary and lonely, and where, by the use of the telescope, he discovered a little stream flowing into the sea, between rocks that shelved down to the beach, and were covered with long thick grass, at the lower end of a valley where nothing could approach a watering-party unseen, he had the brigantine hove to within a moderate distance from the shore, and went off in person, with a well-armed boat's crew, to fill some water-casks.

Clear, pellucid, and cold, the stream bubbled over the lip of rock, and, plashing on the pebbled beach, mingled with the sea. On every side masses of wild vines and arbutus

sprang from the chasms in the limestone rocks, and almost overhung the water in some places. The boat crept close in shore, and the seamen had barely got a cask filled, when one exclaimed :

“ There is a signal of recall flying at the foremast head ! ”

“ Why ? ” asked Rowlock, leaping ashore.

“ Look out ahead, Captain ; there is one of them Russian beggars not far off ! ” exclaimed another.

Rowlock looked up the long grassy vista of the valley, and there sure enough was a scouting Cossack mounted on his shaggy pony, hustled up in his wooden saddle, with his long lance slung behind him, its point glittering in the sun. Rowlock sprang into the boat.

“ Shove off,” he cried, “ and give way with a will ; there may be many more behind the hill, and perhaps a field-piece or two.”

The watering-party made all speed to rejoin the ship, which at once stood off the shore, after the boat was hoisted in.

The Cossack scout, after watching her motions for a little, wheeled round his horse and vanished at a gallop ; and those on board

could little foresee how much that interested them deeply depended upon the report the Muscovite made to his commander, Ivan Mouravieff.

The absolute necessity for obtaining more water made Rowlock go off on the following morning before daybreak to the same spring with more casks, and this he did unmolested, and, as he thought, undiscovered for two other successive mornings.

On the last, while the sun was yet below the sea, the watering-party saw a dark figure suddenly start up from among a little clump of arbutus and approach them.

"Look out!" was the general exclamation; and while some scrambled on board the boat, after being mid-leg in the water, others cocked their rifles and fixed their bayonets, and stood instinctively on their defence.

"*Mes amis—arrêtez, arrêtez donc!*" cried the stranger, in a voice of excitement and alarm. "I am the bearer of a letter for your commander," he continued in French.

"Then give it to me," replied Rowlock, sharply.

The man approached the boat waving a

letter, and in the first grey light of dawn, was pronounced by the sailors "a rum customer," for he was no other than the old Russian priest, with his long floating beard, singular hat with its tails or lappets, and his long, loose brown cassock.

Rowlock, who had a revolver in his left hand and a drawn sword in his right, placed the latter between his teeth, and received the document, which was without an envelope, and was merely a piece of note-paper on which something was written that without more light could not be deciphered.

"It is for the officer commanding your ship, monsieur," said the old man, propping himself on a long horn-handled walking-cane, "and I hope he will fulfil its instructions to the letter, for the slightest mistake may peril all."

"All what?"

"Your lives and the life of him I wish to succour; *adieu, monsieur le marinier*—I refer you to the letter!" he exclaimed, and hurried away.

"You have either said too much or too little, old fellow," said Rowlock; "what the devil can he mean? Can these Russian beg-

gars have poisoned the spring ? I've heard of such things in the Gulf of Persia ; and, by Jingo, my grog *did* taste queer this morning. Stretch out for the yacht, lads."

But the order was scarcely required, for already the sturdy yachtsmen were bending to their oars, and lifting the boat, with its great water-casks, almost out of the water with every strong, steady, and united pull. Soon they came sheering alongside, and while the mates had the boat and casks hoisted in, and the canvas filled to the yard-heads to get off shore and make an offing, Rowlock hurried to the cabin of his master, the Earl, whom he summoned in haste, without the ceremony of sending in a valet to his lordship, who came forth in an elaborate dressing-gown, tied with a silk cord and tassels ; and on hearing the summons, his three gentlemen voyagers, the silver-haired General, Sir Harry, and Gerard, came forth from their berths at the same time, all more or less *déshabillé*.

"For the officer commanding the brigantine, or any other British ship near the Cape," read the Earl on receiving the scrap of paper. "What Cape, Rowlock ?"

"It must mean Kaldantin, my lord—Cape Kaldantin now bears three miles off on our lee bow, I am glad to say, as it is a place we should give a wide berth to."

"Who gave you this?" asked nearly all together.

"A Russian priest at the watering-place."

"My God!" exclaimed the Earl, his face becoming paler in the light of the early morning, as he ran his eye in haste over the note.

"I am a prisoner in the hands of Colonel Mouravieff at Kaldantin," it stated; "he refuses to accept my parole, and I am assured means to do me to death—or worse, by exile—if not speedily rescued. In Heaven's mercy have a boat off the mouth of the cave under the convent cliff to night, if possible, when a lantern is waved from the rock above, and you may be in time to save me. If not—which God avert—make this letter known to the army and the public.

"JULIAN MELVILLE,

"Lieut. R.S.F."

"Julian—Julian!" exclaimed Gerard, as

he clasped his hands, and softer voices blended now with his.

“Ha!” said Kingsmuir, through his teeth; “the prisoner, the deserter spoke of, is Julian, and he yet lives!”

“But in the hands of that unhangd scoundrel, Mouravieff!” added Sir Harry Drake.

Amy covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly, and then it was that, with a generous emotion, Drake put his hand kindly on her shoulder and whispered in her ear:

“Take courage, Miss Kerr—take courage, dear Amy—on the land or the sea we are equally near and under the protection of God!”

“Do you know this place—this cave referred to, Rowlock?” asked the Earl, while Julian’s letter was passed from hand to hand again and again, and viewed with the keenest affection, with anxiety and fear, lest its lines might be the last he should ever pen.

“Know it—that I do, my lord,” replied Rowlock. “I know it but too well; I was wrecked there about ten years ago. You may pull there close in shore, without the use of a

sounding-lead, till you may lay a hand upon the rocks, for they rise sheer from the sea like a wall."

"A boat must await the signal, at all hazards," said the Earl, calmly.

"All right, my lord; we'll make an offing till evening, then creep in shore and shorten sail, out of reach, if possible, of the gun-battery; but if it should come on to blow——"

"Well?"

"Then, my lord, we can't say what may happen," replied Rowlock, with a rather troubled expression at the weather-glass which hung in the cabin.

Remarkable as some of the coincidences in our story may appear, we must remember that Byron says:—

"'Tis strange, but true; for truth is always strange;
Stranger than fiction."

It may be imagined how the day—one of the last in March—was passed on board that princely yacht, as she lay off and on, with little canvas spread, in view of the steep cliff crowned by the masses of the Russian-Greek convent, with all its gilded cupolas glittering

high in air, above the mouth of the ocean-cavern that yawned like a great black tunnel, into which, as yet, the tideless waves were running peacefully.

* * * * *

And now to explain how Julian's letter came to pass, and to fall into the hands of the last people in this world he could have expected to receive it.

Another day after his futile attempt to escape might have seen Salome depart to avoid the importunities of Mouravieff, whom the interior economy of a Russian convent gave too many opportunities for the pursuance of his love affair, and to whom she had urged, almost in vain, the protection of the Archbishop of Odessa, and also that, if he persisted, the affair might end, as she predicted, much to his surprise, in his own destruction; and this idea, with all his innate Muscovite superstition, he ridiculed.

The visit from Salome served somewhat to soothe the perturbation of Julian's spirit, when she came to him, calm, serene in eye and grave in manner, clad in her usual dark dress, a floating robe, Julian knew not what;

but looking so lady-like—so like a tragedy queen, too—with a rich lace veil fastened amid the coils of her glorious black hair, and draped, without study, yet artistically, over one shoulder.

Mouravieff, for some freak of his own, had posted sentinels between the cell wherein Julian lay and the village where the battery stood ; thus, since the punishment of Kutchko the sergeant, and Yury the sentinel, there was not the slightest chance of Julian—disguised though he still was—being permitted to pass them unquestioned ; so that, unless Mouravieff marched off, he might have to remain concealed where he was, for a long period indeed.

To the Russian nuns—long accustomed to the uneventful system of a conventual existence and the peaceful tenor of an unbroken life—where the same petty incidents, the same hours of prayer, and the same kinds of duty recurred daily at their stated periods—where all the passions, cares, doubts, and ambitions of the outer world are supposed to have no place, and peace alone is known—the advent in the vicinity, and almost occupa-

tion of the convent, or a portion thereof, by the ferocious *pulkovniks*, Mouravieff and Saronovitch, certainly startled, worried, and terrified them ; but a more stirring event to record in the annals of their secluded lives was soon about to ensue.

“How very much of our terrible seasons of distress might be spared to us,” says one of our best female novelists, “if we could but see a little further than the present moment—than the atmosphere immediately around”—*i. e.*, to lift the veil of the Future ; but happily for us, in most instances, it is as well that we cannot.

The scouting Cossack we have mentioned had duly reported that a British ship was taking water on board at the spring or stream in the valley, on one or two successive mornings ; but whether it was that Peel’s Naval Brigade at Sebastopol, with their enormous Lancaster guns, had given the Russians a wholesome fear of British seamen ; that the proclamation of peace was nearly signed ; or a doubt of the power of the yacht, which was evidently not a gunboat, and believed to have a heavier battery—we know not ; but, any way,

the *pulkownik* neither came out with his field-pieces, nor molested—though of course his patrols watched—the watering-party.

Thus it was that under the influence of Salome—who had secret plans of her own—the old Russian priest delivered the letter of Julian; a document written with more despair than hope in his heart. The latter knew not the plan of his mysterious protectress, and was only aware that a British ship—with protection, freedom, and liberty under its colours—was at hand; but he knew that to attempt to reach the beach, guarded as every point was by Cossack scouts and patrols, was a matter of the most utter impossibility!

Yet Salome seemed to have no fear of success, and in her accent, as she spoke of this to Julian, there was a softness that had a tone of friendship—even of sisterly regard—that would have made Mouravieff grind his teeth had he heard it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OFF CAPE KALDANTIN.

THE yacht, which during the whole day had apparently been going seaward to deceive the eyes of the sentinels in the gun-battery (if they watched her at all), when dusk fell, bore up for Cape Kaldantin, approaching it by tacks that grew shorter and shorter as she came near it; and fortunately the wind, which was beginning, as Rowlock had feared, to blow a half gale, was off shore.

The sky was cloudy; the moon had not yet risen, and the great dark mass of the headland stood bluffly up in its blackness from the sea, as the yacht crept close in, yet keeping as much as possible out of sight of the battery, and every eye on board watched anxiously for the signal light; and some there were—we need not name them—who did so with emotions that bordered on agony.

Every instant Rowlock was consulting

either his watch, the compass, or barometer, and then, anon, the headland.

The night was becoming overcast, and a Black Sea fog, if it set in, might ruin all. He could but bless his stars that, tide what may, the wind was off the land, and not likely to veer about ; but there was rather more of it than he wished for boat work. The last of the lights in the convent, high on the rock, had disappeared.

Thick clouds came banking up to windward, rendering the outline of the promontory, and the locality of the huge cavern that yawned therein, less distinct ; some heavy drops of rain began to plash upon the deck, and thunder rumbled on the horizon far away.

Hour after hour passed ; the yacht continued making short tacks, yet there was no appearance of the signal. All lights were extinguished on board—no bell was struck ; thus midnight came unannounced—midnight ! Then hope began to die away.

At a great distance to leeward a narrow line of moonlight appeared below the banks of vapour, adding to the weird aspect of the night ; for a time the serrated outline of the

black billows between, could be seen rising and falling against the shining streak, which faded out as the fog bank — for such it was, changed its position, and the wind blew hard and steadily. In short, the night was wild-looking, and Rowlock feared greatly to send off a boat if it increased.

“If day breaks we shall be blown to pieces by the Russian battery,” said the Earl, who, like Gerard, was belted, and had, like him, a sword and revolver.

“Have no fear of the battery, my lord,” said Bob Rowlock; “we are too close under its guns to be touched, however acutely they might be depressed.”

“Yet if day broke ere we made a good offing?” persisted the Earl.

“By that time I hope we shall have made it,” said his captain, who, always equal to any occasion, had found among the bunting in store a Scottish ensign—blue, with a white St. Andrew’s cross, the cross of Russia.—and had it ready flying at the gaff peak, to deceive, in case day did surprise them; “half-past twelve,” said he, consulting his watch at

the binnacle lamp, which was half hidden by a canvas hood.

“There goes the light—the signal!” cried a dozen voices; and every heart bounded on seeing something like a red spark burning but faintly, high in air, at the brow of the cliff.

“Stand by all hands to shorten sail!” cried Rowlock promptly; “man the fore clue garnets—hands by the peak and throat hal-yards; let go tacks and sheets; clew up; steady lads; stand by the falls, and lower away the quarter boat and bring it round to leeward.”

In less than a minute the brigantine lay too, rising and falling on the heavy swell, nearly denuded of her canvas. Neither Kate nor Amy, nor even their female attendants, would go below, but remained on deck, scared by the whole affair, the apparent bustle—yet all was most orderly—and their faces were blanched with fear; their very teeth chattered as they clung to the belaying pins aft, and looked upon the scene. There was another, too, on board who shared their excitement and alarm, though not their anxiety—Mr. Funnell,

the butler, who had taken refuge in his pantry off the dining-cabin.

The quarter-boat, so called from being hung from davits over the brigantine's quarter, in half a minute was alongside, and General Kingsmuir saw off the party detailed for the shore belted with loaded Minie rifles and cutlasses. Old as he was, he could with difficulty be restrained from accompanying them, though all unfit for such work; but, ultimately, he agreed to remain with his daughter and her friend, who had but one benumbing idea—a great and terrible event was about to happen, an event connected with Julian, and there seemed, all unused as she was to such scenes and excitements, a horrible unreality about it.

Notwithstanding the chilly hour, and the alleged weakness of his health, Deloraine would go with the boat; for whatever his defects of character might be, want of courage was not one of them; for in spirit he was as true a Deloraine as the stark moss-trooper who rode from Branksome to Melrose; so now he was risking his life, it might be, to save that of one whom he had hitherto ignored, and had well-nigh hated—Julian!

And by his side, too, was jolly, hearty, and gallant young Sir Harry Drake, doing the same for his rival ; because for all that might be foreseen, a volley of Russian rifles was the greeting that awaited them on shore.

Though terribly excited, Gerard looked strangely composed and cool, but it was " the hush of desperation." As the boat was shoved off from the ship the muffled oars dipped in the water, and she sped steadily over the long heaving ground-swells in shore.

The red spark had vanished from the brow of the cliff by this time ; none knew what this might portend, but the signal had been given and must be responded to.

Higher and higher with every stroke of the oars rose the dark outline of the land ; a little white streak of surf became visible through the gloom, and Rowlock, who had the yoke-lines, knew that when there was a break—a blackness in this streak—the mouth of the cavern was indicated, and he steered straight and steadily for it.

On and on went the boat ; the surf came nearer and nearer ; anon the sound of it would be heard as it chafed on the right and left, and

in half a minute more, pulling with shortened oars, the boat was gliding into the dark and ghostly uncertainty of the vast cavern, and its arch of rock yawned high overhead.

In a little time the oars touched the walls of limestone and coarse marble on each side, while a man in the prow stood ready with a boat-hook, and another kept sounding with the hand-lead, which is always used in rivers, harbours, and shoal water ; but the latter was many fathoms deep at the place where further progress was impeded by the rocks against which the prow of the boat grated.

Sir Harry Drake had a large ship's lantern, but it was deemed as yet unwise to uncover it, lest it might prove a mark for any hostile party. Dead silence was maintained, and all listened intently for any sound that might indicate what was next to happen, for Julian's escape might be frustrated, and all their lives put thereby in deadly peril ; day might dawn ere they could rejoin the ship, and if the wind increased to a gale, she might be blown out to sea, leaving the boat the helpless mark for the guns in the battery.

Suddenly voices and footsteps were heard,

but at a distance apparently ; then a dim light began to flicker amid the far recesses of this ocean cavern, revealing what the darkness had hitherto concealed, long stalactites or fantastic congelations, like the carved pendants and bosses of a Gothic cathedral ; then as the imperfect light increased, columnar masses like monstrous caryatides, supporting the stony arch, came out in relief ; the scared sea-birds started from their eyries, or nests, and the flapping of their wings on the damp air mingled with the sound of the sea as it murmured, sucked, and gurgled in the far recesses of the hollow vault.

“Hush !” said the Earl, as the seamen began to mutter and instinctively cocked their rifles. Gerard shivered with excitement, and seemed again to feel coming over him the strange emotion he had experienced in the train at Zevenaar and on the Rhine, before Salome entered the carriage—the inborn consciousness of her presence and approach.

The boat had thus long since vanished from the sight of all on board the brigantine. Armed with a night-glass, General Kingsmuir was searching for her in vain ; while his daughter

and Amy Kerr clung to him, and both uttered a simultaneous shriek when the crack of fire-arms, with a thousand reverberations, was heard, and a great glare of light filled, for nearly a minute, the mouth of the ghastly cavern, and streamed steadily from thence across the water.

Then it faded out and darkness reigned over everything again.

What was ensuing there? Who were wounded—who killed? The girls covered their faces, and the old General, kept there inactive like a Highland stag-hound in the leash, panted rather than breathed, in his desire to be in the thick of the fray.

* * * * *

It has been often alleged that though love and sentiment still exist, the days of romance are over. "Our modern civilization," says a writer, "has set its heel on knightly enterprise. Nowadays, a man could not be chivalrous if he tried ever so hard. Railways, post-offices, and electric telegraphs have made all things easy, and romance is dead!" Yet we have something very much akin to it to relate now.

In the cell or chapel which formed the hiding-place of Julian, we have mentioned that there was a stair hewn in the rock, and formed apparently to communicate with some other place. By that stair it was that his escape was to be achieved. .

On the appointed night Salome came to him in haste, when all seemed quiet and still in and around Kaldantin, for midnight was at hand. She was muffled in a dark mantle, and carried a lamp, the flickering of which played fitfully on her pale face and snow-white hands.

"Come with me," she exclaimed, yet calmly and without excitement—for that she never exhibited; "we have as little time to lose as when last I set you free. Mouravieff has learned how, or suspects, why I know not, that you are concealed among the convent buildings, and even now is searching for you; but he knows nothing of the secrets of this place, though I do. Come with me," she added, taking his hand in hers; "and I will be your guide."

"Where, madam?"

"To where your countrymen will soon be awaiting you;" knowing that at that moment

her compatriot the old *padre*, was secretly displaying the signal from the summit of the cliff.

Ascending the steps, they passed through a narrow passage hewn in the rock, and through a succession of cells similar to that they had left—cells precisely like those at Inkermann, and in one or two of which lay the same kind of empty sarcophagi that are found there. The atmosphere, cold and chill, grew colder as they proceeded, and winged things, bats apparently, flitted constantly to and fro, threatening to extinguish the lamp, and snapping their mandibles together, with a vicious kind of twitter.

There was something inexpressibly weird and dramatic about the whole situation; but Julian thought only of escape, and not of pictorial effect.

“I trust the boat will be at the appointed place; but the night is a wild one,” said Salome, as still conducting Julian by the hand, she led him through a kind of natural gallery, into the upper end of the sea cave, the vague, dark, and remote uncertainties of which her feeble lamp utterly failed to penetrate (though its light and their presence

scared the wild sea-birds in hundreds from the shelves of rock where they roosted), while they began to descend the rough and slippery way that led towards its entrance and the water.

"How came you to know of this cavern? Surely it was never trod before by your feet, and yet you act as guide?" said Julian.

"Ask me not how I came to know it—there are few places hereabout unknown to me."

"You are then a native?"

"No."

"Your country ——"

"Is far away from here," she replied, with one of her sad, dreamy smiles; but there is the boat," she added hastily, as if to change the subject; and at a great distance, apparently, they could see it, like a dark object, glide in from the water outside. Julian's heart began to beat wildly and hopefully.

"And you," said he, pressing her soft and velvet-like hand; "you cannot return through this horrid place alone."

"Oh, fear not for me."

"Why, madam?"

"Because I fear not for myself."

"Come with us from among these hated Russians," he urged.

She shook her head.

"You are not of their race, I am certain."

"No."

"Nor creed?"

"No."

"Come with me, I entreat you, to a place of safety, beyond the reach of this atrocious Mouravieff."

"I cannot—I have a mission to fulfil elsewhere—hark! we are pursued," she exclaimed, as voices and heavy steps were heard behind them, waking the echoes of the hollow cells and stone corridors they had traversed, and they had barely reached the edge of the water when the Russian commandant, with three of the Jakoutsk Regiment appeared; a torch was borne by one, and the footsteps of others thick and fast were heard coming on in hot pursuit, the half-savage Calmucks scarcely knew of whom or what, but luckily armed only with their bayonets.

All that followed passed within the space of a minute!

“Heaven and earth—it is Salome!” exclaimed Gerard, as he stood erect in the boat, and the light of her upheld lamp fell full upon the pale face of the bearer.

He felt as if his heart had ceased to beat ; the walls of the cave, all masses of red or copper-coloured marble, seemed to rock, and rise, and fall around him like the waves of the sea, and he would either have fallen or sprung ashore had he not been instinctively grasped and withheld by the strong hand of Sir Harry Drake, who, as he afterwards said, “didn’t know what the deuce was up.”

No operatic tableau could be more striking or dramatic in its effect than this cavern scene for some seconds.

A Russian soldier had lighted a fire-ball and cast it on a shelf of rock, where it blazed and sputtered, causing the sea-birds to flit wildly from side to side with flapping wings and shrill cries ; and, by its strong blue glare of ghastly light, producing weird and fearful forms, with a wondrous variety of reflected tints, mixed with secondary shades, on deep and invisible recesses, and on the watery floor of the cavern, rolling in deep and heavy swells as it was

agitated by the sea without, producing singular effects. On the fierce Calmuck visages of the grey-capoted Russians, as they came leaping and stumbling down from the dark recesses of the place; on Mouravieff's tall figure and excited face; on Salome, standing calm and placid and statuesque, with all her marvellous beauty; and on Julian, clad like a Cossack of the Dnieper, looking thoroughly bewildered, weary, and worn, shone that unnatural glare.

On the other hand was the boat with its seamen, their glittering cutlasses fixed to their rifles, then ready cocked; the tall form of the dark-faced Earl; Sir Harry, in his tattered Guards uniform, his sword in one hand, the other grasping firmly Gerard, who was gazing like one turned to stone on the pure white face of Salome.

By this time the boat's head had been turned seaward by Rowlock, to be ready for any emergency, and the crossed oars lay still in their rowlocks; and now, at the sight of the armed boat's crew, the Russians descending the rocks paused and hesitated, all at least save Mouravieff.

Julian had expected a man-of-war's boat, and from the arms, dress, and aspect of the seamen, thought it was one. The Earl and Gerard he never recognised—for he had no thought of them then; but strange to say the former knew him by his likeness to *himself*.

All this scene, we say, was visible for a few seconds by the weird flame of the fire-ball, which irradiated the whole place, and then began to die out. Ere this, Mouravieff, with a hoarse oath or interjection, had fired a pistol at Julian, but missed him; ere he could fire again the Earl's revolver had sent a bullet whistling through the brain of the half-savage Russian, who threw up his arms wildly, and falling with a splash into the water, was seen no more.

Pistol practice was nothing new to Deloraine; he had more than once covered and winged his man at sunrise on the Bois de Boulogne, and on the flat, dreary sands of Dunquerque.

A pistol-shot fired—none knew by whom—now struck Gerard, breaking his left arm above the elbow, and he fell heavily into the

boat just as Julian leaped on board and the expiring of the fireball left the place in darkness, all save the lamp of Salome, the light of which seemed feeble as a distant star.

She had said that Sonnenberg, and all who ventured to love her, perished. Mouravieff was gone, and it seemed as if Gerard would be the next to follow, as he was bleeding profusely.

"Away for the ship—give way, my lads!" cried Rowlock, "lay out on your oars—pull for your lives and pull together!"

With fierce, united energy, and bated breath, as the blades in succession seemed to grasp the water, the rowers almost lifted the boat out of it, stroke after stroke, as they shot out of that place of gloom, and were once more upon the open sea.

Hand over hand they seemed to near the yacht, from the side of which a lantern was lowered to the surface of the water as a guide. They speedily reached her; all scrambled on board—the boat was hoisted in, the huge fore and aft sails, the fore-top-sail, top-gallant-sail, and the head-sails hoisted up and sheeted home, and with the stormy wind still

blowing off the land, with her sharp prow cutting the water, she soon made an offing that rendered useless the guns in the Russian battery, where the glare of port fires could be seen, ere the light of the coming dawn, as it came in, threw forward in black outline, the sinking headland of Kaldantin—sinking into the sea, with all the domes and cupolas of its convent.

Ere this, there had been a scene in the cabin few romances could equal ; it embodied so much of explanation, of astonishment, and joy ; the first of these emotions was most keenly felt by the rescued when he saw by whom he was surrounded, and learned *who* his immediate preserver was ; but the latter emotion was damped by alarm for his brother, who, between his wound and the memory of the face he had seen, appeared for a time well-nigh stupefied.

Yet, when in the lighted cabin he again caught sight of the well-remembered, yea, treasured face, looking altered and almost aged by long-suffering, wolfish in eye by facing grim death daily, he uttered a cry of joy and they were at once locked together hand

in hand, and eye bent affectionately upon eye, while moved to tears, for both had undergone much, and each had so much to tell unto the other !

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

WE have said that from Kaldantin it was about a hundred miles, as the crow flies, to Sebastopol, where alone Gerard could get his wound dressed and the bone set, and ere it could be reached the great abutting promontory of Cape Caramoun had to be circumnavigated ; but Julian had seen much of gunshot wounds, so had Bob Rowlock, and between them they did all that could be done for the sufferer till better aid could be had.

In the yacht of the Earl of Deloraine, with so many friends—for, though small the circle, they seemed many to one so long friendless—acknowledged as the Lord Hermitage, and through the means of Gerard, as Kate told him ! “ By what miracle,” Julian exclaimed, “ has all this come about ? ”

It was a strange story to tell, as Gerard did so, in solemn confidence ; but to Julian,

it seemed a stranger one to hear. "It certainly is not often in this life that improbable dreams of fame and fortune get to be realised," says some one, yet in the instance of Julian they were so ; but it seemed as if some time must elapse ere he could comprehend it.

If the Earl felt some shame and compunction for his past conduct to his sons generally—to Julian, when in London, in particular—he was now glad that, by his late display of energy and courage in the rescue, he had made some atonement for the past ; and, indeed, Mouravieff, while losing his own vile life, had given Deloraine an opportunity of acting as he could never have hoped to do. Thus, as Julia Kavanagh says, "Man may repent, God may forgive, and the world never know the sinner's wrong ; but atonement is seldom or ever within the sinner's reach."

So if Deloraine could not atone to Gladys Melville or her father, he could do so at least to Julian and Gerard.

The latter, but for the novelty of Julian's presence and companionship, would have been

inconsolable, and must have striven by some
 strange fiasco to rejoin Salome, whose story
 sufficiently perplexed his brother, to whom he
 alone related it with a belief so implicit that
 all the former might urge, or suggest, made
 but "You will forget her in time, dear fellow,"
 said Julian, almost laughing at his brother's
 earnestness; "another will come in her place."
 "Another! we seldom come in her place."
 "But did she love you, Gerard?"
 "Julian, I will find her, if I wander to
 Poles in search of her!" It can-
 not be always a one-sided affair."
 "No, you won't. This is lunacy, Gerard;
 evidently does not want you, and
 elude and avoid you, by your own
 nt."
 "Long in the heart of Gerard grew the
 to follow and to find her; but whether
 or did so we may tell at a future time.
 so now would far exceed the limits
 resent volumes.
 to think of her being in the hands
 people!" he continued, "She has,

you say, a protection from Innocent, the Archbishop of Odessa ? ”

“ Yes ; and if she required that, surely the wild story told you by that old Jew fellow at Wiesbaden must be a fable. But here comes Kate. Oh, Kate,” added Julian, affectionately, but without an iota of tenderness, “ as I see you now, with the sunlight tipping your ruddy golden hair, you look—though only a little more matronly—still the Kate of the dear old times at home.”

The days and evenings passed pleasantly, as the yacht, after rounding Cape Caramoun, ran along the rocky coast southward, skirting Eupatoria Bay, in sight of the beautiful and fertile coast round Bagtche Serai, and heading for Cape Chersonese. Meanwhile, they were never weary of hearing Julian comparing notes of recent affairs with the General and Sir Harry, or hearing his modestly told stories (which had all the genuine freshness that actual observation and participation confer) of his Crimean experiences, and of poor Achille Richebourg the Zouave, whom he never ceased to regret ; and as Amy seemed to hang on his words, though his face was

thinner, browner, and more hairy than its wont, it was refined as ever, and its old expression of gentleness came back.

“ You’ll land me at Balaclava, Deloraine,” said Sir Harry. “ I’ll cut short my leave by a month ; but what does that matter—I am better with the corps than here.” None had welcomed the rescued Julian more cordially or warmly than he ; but now he instinctively felt himself *de trop*, and when the red and copper-coloured bluffs of Cape Aya came in sight, he bade his friends adieu, and joined the brigade on shore, “ a sadder and a wiser man.”

This was on Wednesday, the 2nd of April, the very day when the Treaty of Peace, which had been signed at Paris, was announced to the Allied armies by a salute of one hundred and one pieces of cannon, that pealed like thunder from the heights of Sebastopol, over the green plains of Balaclava, and the caverned valley of Inkermann—yea, far over the waters of the Euxine, from whence the ships of war responded.

On that evening the Earl’s yacht hauled up for the Bosphorus, and Julian, as yet unfit

for duty, after all he had undergone, went homeward in her.

"How happy—oh, how happy we all are!" said Kate, clapping her white hands in almost childish glee, as the beautiful brigantine, careening beneath the soft eastern or landward breeze, sped on its way like a mighty sea-bird, and the far-famed shores of the fatal Crimea faded away astern.

Yes, fatal! for with all the glory we won, it will be impossible to forget the day of the Alma, the charge of the Six Hundred, and that

"Far away, where the bleak winds are sobbing and sighing,
Where Inkermann's heights look across the cold sea,
The graves of thy heroes, oh, Britain! are lying,
Who gave their lives freely for honour and thee!"

* * * * *

In love affairs propinquity achieves great things. Ere Malta was reached, when cloudy "mamma Kingsmuir" joined the genial old General, and certainly ere the spires of Marseilles came in sight, Kate's prediction, that a woman was always sure to obtain the heart of the man she loved, seemed likely to be verified.

"And you, Amy, have not forgotten me?"

said Julian, as they were on deck together alone on a moonlight night, when the swift yacht was bearing through the Archipelago, with all her fore and aft canvas set as she rolled before the wind, and the deep blue waves, that ran careering past, were rolling in silver on the marble rocks of Zia.

“Forgotten you?” said the girl in a breathless and almost upbraiding voice, while her eyes drooped and her heart beat quicker, for the question seemed a leading one; “I have ever been proud to hear of you—how noble and brave you have been; and how you have done your duty — especially when I remembered the sad time when we saw you last.”

Julian had never forgotten that time, and he showed her the handkerchief he had preserved as a souvenir of it, and faster than ever beat Amy’s heart, while his swelled with gratitude, which, though not love, is closely akin to it, and, with a lovely girl to inspire it, can scarcely fail to end in a tender passion; and remembering all the past, and the dear old times that seemed so long ago, and yet were not, all Julian’s heart went forth again

to the girl who had never ceased to love him. One glance passed between them ; each read that, in the eye of the other, which made their hearts thrill, and he drew her close to him.

In truth, this had come about sooner than she expected. Triumph and joy had been in her heart, and she had begun to feel sure of a sweet love-scene with Julian at any moment ; but also felt that much was due to herself. He was the same penniless young man she had loved long ago in Ettrick and elsewhere, and over whom she had wept in his illness and sorrow ; but *now* he was the Lord Hermitage and the heir to an earldom !

And sooth to say, apart from her affectionate nature, there was much to attract and love in Amy ; she had a beautifully-formed mouth, on which a shy half-smile was ever playing ; grey-blue eyes shaded by long dark lashes ; she was impressionable and accomplished, light-hearted, and had those versatile gifts of mind that gave her so much individuality of character.

And, as their hands met, his lingered for a time caressingly in the firm soft clasp of the

slender white fingers he longed to hold for ever, and was free to do so now.

Amy looked up at him shyly, yet tenderly, even as he looked tenderly down on her; his young face seemed haggard still; his eyes, steadfast yet, were softening in expression, and that sternness which had become the normal indication of his finely-curved lip (now almost hidden by a dark, untrimmed moustache) was passing away amid the more genial influences that surrounded him.

Julian, who with all his enforced wandering and roving was essentially a home-bird, and fond—dearly fond—of his native land, was never tired of talking to her of old times, and of old people they had known in common, when friends and companions at Kingsmuir and Kerrshope in pastoral Ettrick, and the days were now passed in unalloyed delight to both.

“You have been my good angel, Amy, in many ways, although you knew it not,” said he on one occasion.

The old familiar use of her Christian name on his lips always delighted her.

“How, Julian?” she asked.

“ The thought of you, and the knowledge that one so good, so pure, and disinterested as you felt concerned in one whom no one loved (save poor Gerard)—you, as far removed from me as the moon above the brook—kept me courageous in many a trying hour of desperation and despair.”

“ Poor Julian ! ”

As Amy listened to his voice she felt as one in a dream, for it summoned so many past memories that were dear to her—the events, associations, and interests of her girlhood at home came back fresh and green, even to the sound of the old church bells, the forest trees of Ettrick and the solemn hills that look down on the Gala and Yarrow ; her eyes were on the shores of the Cyclades, but she saw them not ; nor did she hear the rush of the waves, but only the voice of her lover.

Generous and single-hearted though her love had ever been, Amy was too practical a girl to believe in any impossible future ; and yet that future, once apparently so impossible, had come, and now Julian was her own !

And so in their present happiness we shall leave them, with a reference to the last

appearance of Julian's name in print, a few months subsequently, when we were told that "the Queen had been graciously pleased to confer on the Lord Hermitage the Victoria Cross, for his gallant conduct in rescuing and remounting Major-General Kingsmuir, during a sortie from Sebastopol, on the night of the 20th October; also for personally engaging and killing, or putting to flight, five Russians, and thereby saving the life of Colonel Sir H. Drake, of the Guards, at Inkermann, on the morning of the 5th of November."

"This," added the *Court Circular*, "is the same young noble whose marriage with the heiress of Kershope we so lately chronicled."

So Kate's prediction was fulfilled in every way.

THE END.



